

# Among the Chiglit Eskimos

by Father Émile Petitot

Translated from the French by Dr. E.O. Höhn



Occasional Publication No. 10

**Boreal Institute**  
For Northern Studies

CW 401 Biological Sciences Building  
The University of Alberta  
Edmonton, Alberta  
Canada, T6G 2E9



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Father Emile Petitot

Translation of "Les Grands Esquimaux"

by

E. Otto Höhn

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
FOREWORD . . . . .	i
PETITOT'S LIFE AND WORK . . . . .	v
TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE . . . . .	xi
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
BOOK 1. WINTER EXCURSION . . . . .	7
Chapter I. Fort Anderson . . . . .	7
Chapter II. On the Anderson River . . . . .	13
Chapter III. Continuation of the Journal . . . . .	23
Chapter IV. In an Eskimo Home . . . . .	31
Chapter V. My Amiable Hosts . . . . .	39
Chapter VI. How I Got My Own Back . . . . .	49
Chapter VII. Our Visitors . . . . .	56
Chapter VIII. A Juggling Performance . . . . .	62
Chapter IX. Navikan . . . . .	67
Chapter X. Return to Fort Anderson . . . . .	76
BOOK 2. SUMMER EXCURSION . . . . .	81
Chapter I. Itinerary From Fort Good Hope to Fort MacPherson . . . . .	81
Chapter II. The Peel River Eskimos . . . . .	91
Chapter III. Eskimo Customs . . . . .	99
Chapter IV. The Niro-kilov-alouk or Husky Channel . . . . .	107
Chapter V. On the Niro-tounar-louk (the West Channel) . . . . .	116
Chapter VI. The Expedition Miscarries . . . . .	126
Chapter VII. Check But Not Mate . . . . .	137
Chapter VIII. Krarayalok . . . . .	144
Chapter IX. Kreyouktark and Nakoyork . . . . .	151
Chapter X. The Second Check . . . . .	159
Chapter XI. An Inglorious Return Leads to a Discovery . . . . .	169
Chapter XII. Arviouna . . . . .	182
Chapter XIII. Last Visit With the Eskimos . . . . .	192
TRANSLATOR'S NOTES . . . . .	201
ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS	
Emile Petitot . . . . .	iv
Portion of Petitot's Map . . . . .	4
Modern Sketch Map of the Area . . . . .	5
Noulloumallok Innonarana . . . . .	8
Inside Noulloumallok's Igloo . . . . .	40



## FOREWORD

Emile Petitot died in Mareuil-lès-meaux, France in July 1916. His book on "Les Grands Esquimaux" was published in Paris in 1887. It is surprising that it took nearly a century for this famous writing on the Tchiglit Eskimos to be made available in English. Professor Höhn and the Boreal Institute for Northern Studies are to be congratulated; Dr. Höhn for the translation into English and the Boreal Institute for publishing it.

It was at Grancey-le-Château (Côte d'Or) France, that on December 3rd, 1838, the birth took place of Emile Fortuné Stanislas Joseph Petitot, son of a watchmaker. In 1860, he entered the Congregation of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary-Immaculate. Fourteen days after being ordained priest at Marseille, he left France in 1862 to go to the Athabaska-Mackenzie region and more specifically to Fort Good Hope near Great Bear Lake.

On March 1865, Petitot left by himself to visit the Eskimos of the Anderson and Mackenzie Rivers.

The missionary visited the Tchiglit only five times in the space of thirteen years and spent the summers of 1868 and 1869 among them. In March 1865, he was at Fort Anderson, better known as Eskimo Fort. On the 16th of that month, he met some Eskimos there, including Noulloumallok-Innonarana, "chief" of the Tchiglit. Two days later, he was on the Anderson River, en route for the Arctic Sea. He made that whole trip in the company of Noulloumallok, sharing his food and shelter. Noulloumallok, had great respect for Petitot whom he called: Mitchi Pitchitork Tchikraynarm iyayé, (Mr. Petitot, son of the Sun). According to the missionary, his Indian guide was so afraid of the Eskimos that they had to return to Fort Anderson at a time when they were only four hours walk from the Arctic Sea. There, a letter from Father Jean Séguin, his companion at Good Hope, was urging his prompt return.

On October 22nd, 1865, he went out again towards the Arctic Sea but failed to reach his goal; he therefore stayed among the Loucheux. Having returned to Fort Anderson, he left for the country of Bâtards-Loucheux, on the upper Anderson.

Three years had passed since an epidemic which, in 1865, decimated the population in the Northwest.

In the spring of 1868, Petitot was again given permission to visit the Eskimos. Despite the influence he claimed to possess among the Eskimos, he had many enemies among them who openly displayed their dislike and mistrust. Some of them believed he had

been the cause of the 1865 epidemic and wanted to do away with him. His two Hareskin guides, terrified, were begging him not to stay. He therefore went back to Good Hope.

On June the 1st, 1869, he set out once more, but again his Indian guides, afraid of the Eskimos, diverted the canoe and fled into the woods.

Several years later, on June 5th, 1877, Petitot took a boat for Fort MacPherson. His Superior had forbidden him to follow the Eskimos to their camps. His mission was to be limited to meeting with them at Fort MacPherson. But he was greeted by them with cries of: O Perk Pitchitork! O innok-toyok! (O Father Petitot, O great man, great man!) They urged him to come and establish a mission on the shores of the Arctic Sea, but he had to decline their invitation.

After the Eskimos had gone, factor Baptiste Boucher appealed to Petitot to go to Alaska where the Dindjié Rhane-Kouttchin, or River people (Gens du fleuve) and the Koucha-Kouttchin or Giant people (Gens géants) were hoping he could come. A messenger had just arrived from Alaska especially for this purpose, but again Petitot had to decline.

During the years he spent in the Canadian Northwest, Petitot was interested chiefly in the geography of the country and the ethnology of its people. In addition he contributed to our knowledge of geology, paleontology, zoology and botany in these areas.

His contribution to geography is certainly exhaustive. He set down on a map he drew of the Northwest many itineraries and corrected and completed in many respects the maps of his precursors, in particular that of Sir John Franklin. In the field of anthropology, his publications cover the Tchiglit Eskimos, the Déné and the Algonquin Indians. His linguistic works include a French-Eskimo Vocabulary.

Contrary to evolutionist theories (Klemm, Morgan, Tylor) who looked upon the history and development of mankind as a complexification of the process "wildness, barbarousness and civilization" Petitot expounds a theory of degeneracy in which original man was characterized by perfection and in which history and development represent conditions increasingly removed from perfection.

In his scientific explanations, Petitot constantly refers to the proposition of the unity of the human species which would originally be identifiable with the Hebrew people. He suggests that, at a given time, there occurred a division of that people, followed by a universal migration and a multiplication of languages.

In this framework, present societies become fragments of the original people. The so-called primitive societies are the ones that achieved the closest approach to this original state.

Petitot attempts, by means of analogies, to relate peoples to one another and to prove their community of origin. Some researchers have criticized Petitot's use of analogy because, according to them, analogies of languages and customs prove nothing in the matter of races.

In conclusion, one would have to say that Petitot's work provides another and unique time perspective. As one reads through the massive volume of Petitot's manuscripts, publications and personal letters we can see that Petitot was a keen and astute observer; he had a subtle and inquisitive mind and an encyclopaedic knowledge. This was recognized on September 22, 1975, when The Honourable Judd Buchanan, then Minister of Indian & Northern Affairs unveiled at Mareuil-lès-Meaux, France a plaque commemorating the scientific contribution of Emile Petitot to the Canadian North.

Donat Savoie,  
Chief,  
Northern Social Research Division,  
Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.  
1980



Emile Petitot  
Missionary priest, in winter travelling attire  
from a photograph



## PETITOT'S LIFE AND WORK

Petitot was not the only Oblate in the Canadian Northwest who distinguished himself outside the sphere of missionary work, but his significant contributions, not just to one but to several fields of knowledge, make his record unique. Emile Fortuné Stanislas Joseph Petitot (1838-1916) was born in southern France near Marseilles. At twenty-four he was ordained to the Priesthood and joined the order of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate<sup>1</sup> which sent him to North America early in the same year (1862). He reached St. Paul, Minnesota, in May and the Mackenzie Valley by August. Here he remained for the next thirteen years, based at the missions of Fort Providence, Fort Resolution and, for most of the time, Fort Good Hope.

During these years he collected the material for his "Dictionnaire de la langue Dené-Dindjié," a dictionary of the major Athapaskan Indian languages, which was published in France in 1876. Twenty-five years ago, when working for the summer for the Indian Health Service in the Mackenzie, I noticed a copy of this brown folio in the common rooms of the Catholic missions I had occasion to visit, and so first became aware of its author. This dictionary can fairly be called monumental. The bulk of the work, 367 pages, lists French words with their equivalents in Chipewyan, Hare Indian and Loucheux in parallel columns; this is preceded by a monograph on the people of these tribes, an essay on their origin and a grammar of their languages, and is followed by several folding tables on the conjugation of verbs. The study of languages which have no writing is, of course, particularly time-consuming, and one of Petitot's more recent colleagues has stated that the former's thirteen years in the field had not been long enough for him to get "to the bottom" of his subject. Nevertheless, Petitot's dictionary remains the best work available in its field.

On returning to the University from my first northern summer, I looked up Petitot in the library catalogue and was thus led to another, even more interesting product of Petitot's years in the Mackenzie Valley. This was a collection of Indian legends of the Canadian Northwest ("Traditions des Indiens du Canada Nord-ouest") published in 1886 as one of a number of volumes in a series called "Littératures populaires de toute les nations," which has been reprinted in 1967. Petitot's volume contains 75 Hare Indian as well as a smaller number of Chipewyan, Loucheux, Dogrib and a few Cree and Blackfoot legends. These stories convey a picture of a world often shrouded in Ossianic mists where monsters and demigods, creatures half-animal half-spirit, come and go, and where anything may happen. It is an uncomfortable, uncertain world, which is, we may suppose, how it must appear to primitive peoples ignorant of most of what we call the laws of nature.

The compilation of the dictionary and the collection of the legends might suggest that Petitot lead a quiet, scholarly life,

performing his religious duties, taking notes at Indian campfires and working over his materials in the solitude and silence of his room at the mission. No doubt such sedentary tasks took up some of his time, but much of it, summer and winter, was spent on a series of long exploratory journeys in bark canoes or on snowshoes. Petitot had one or several native companions on these journeys, but he often travelled into territory as unknown to his guides as to himself.

The first of these journeys, made in 1864, may be taken as an example. It was preceded by a walk on snowshoes from Petitot's first station at Providence to Fort Resolution. Here he spent the early months of the year and then crossed Great Slave Lake to Fort Rae. Seeing bald eagles nesting on some of the islands in the lake, and having heard that they were good to eat, he wanted to make the experiment and cooked two young birds, much against the advice of his Dogrib companions, who looked on these eagles as "great medicine" and therefore taboo. The eagle broth tasted fetid and bitter and Petitot, to the great joy of the Indians, found himself unable to swallow even a mouthful. When the party soon afterwards ran into bad weather, the Indians naturally attributed this to the sacrilege Petitot had committed against the eagles.

At Fort Rae where there was a recently established mission, which however still lacked a permanent incumbent, more Dogrib men were encountered. They wanted Petitot to travel farther north with them to Lake Faber, where the bulk of the tribe was said to be, so that he could teach Christianity to their wives and children and others who, unlike themselves, had never been to Fort Rae. Their chief, Bear Grease, urged Petitot, "Shall we be the only ones of our people to get to Heaven? What shall we do there all alone without wives, children or parents? We'll die of boredom. Our wives are still in the power of the devil and our children are covered with sin. Come with us to our people."

Petitot agreed and set out with a group of companions bearing, as was the case in most of his journeys, decidedly quaint native names. In this case they were, apart from Bear Grease, Large Intestine, Pointed Belly and Little Tobacco, all sons of the eighty year old senior chief, Shining Sun. In addition to these aristocrats, there were Ankle Bone, The Madman, Fine Sand, On the Dung, Little Unfortunate, Sweet Buttocks and others. Faber Lake, which Petitot so named, was reached, but only two Indians were found there who reported that the other people were still farther north. Eventually, after a journey on which the dogs had to do without food for over a week and the men were on short commons, the bulk of the tribe was found at Lake Hardisty, which Petitot so named after a contemporary Hudson's Bay Company chief factor. Most of these people had never seen a white man before and one of the women asked one of Petitot's companions, "Is that a man?"

"Sure," was the reply.

"That's too much to believe, it's a marvel," was the woman's comment.

Petitot spent over two months with these people before returning to Fort Resolution; the results of his missionary work with them were three hundred and nineteen baptisms, fifty-three marriages and one thousand two hundred confessions. From Resolution he travelled in late summer of the same year to Good Hope, which became his home for a number of years to come. Some of Petitot's journeys between 1866 and 1872 took him into the Mackenzie Delta and the valley of the Anderson River. His journeys with Eskimos, his stay with an Eskimo family on the Anderson River, as well as the residence of an Eskimo couple at the Good Hope mission with Petitot for some months, resulted in the preparation of a French-Eskimo dictionary published in 1876. In the same year he also wrote a short monograph on the Anderson River-Mackenzie Delta Eskimos. As most of the people of this group were later wiped out by epidemics and were largely replaced by immigrants from Alaska, his account of the original inhabitants of this area is particularly valuable. He reports that they filed their teeth to a point, that the men wore labrets (as shown by a photo, in my possession, taken about 1920; this was also the custom of some of the more recent population of the area until comparatively recently), and pierced their ears for the insertion of various decorations. The women dressed their hair in a chignon which incorporated hairpieces from their husbands' hair, or hair obtained from other women and they also wore long side curls. This coiffure was so bulky that their parkas had to have larger hoods than those of the men. The fur trim of the hoods of both sexes, however, was much as it is at present; a short-haired white fur and a longer-haired strip of wolf or wolverine fur which surrounds the raised hood with a sort of aureole. Affirmation was indicated by wrinkling the nose and admiration was expressed by putting out the tongue.

Of the seasonal life of these Eskimos, he states that before the opening of the Hudson's Bay Company post of Fort MacPherson in 1849, they traded in the spring with Indians at the head of the Mackenzie Delta, as well as on the coast at Barter Island with more western Eskimos from whom they obtained articles such as pipes and cooking pots derived from the Russians in Alaska. These spring trips were made with dog sleds for these people did not apparently make satisfactory snowshoes; en route they never camped in woods but instead built snow houses in the open. Their more permanent winter houses such as Petitot saw on the lower Anderson River had a stout wooden frame supporting walls of earth and snow. In June they travelled to the trading posts once more, this time by boat-- the men in kayaks of white whaleskin; women, old men and children in umiaks. Muskrats were hunted from kayaks using a trident; seals, white whales, caribou and muskoxen were pursued with spears. Following this trip, about a month, from mid-July onward was spent fishing, surplus fish being smoked or kept in whale oil. The rest of July and

August was taken up by caribou hunting as the animals came to the coast at this season. This was followed by a period of hunting white whales at the mouth of the Anderson River and the mouths of several of the channels of the Mackenzie Delta. The whale hunt brought the scattered families together. At this season they lived in conical caribou skin tents, with no opening at the top to allow smoke to escape, until October. Then they left the coast for their winter homes, which lay, in small scattered groups, some way up the estuaries of the major rivers.

After thirteen years of almost continuous exploration, for he travelled to Great Bear Lake alone, seven times, Petitot returned to France on leave. He reached his homeland in 1874. There he attended an international congress of Americanists. His discourse on the Asiatic origin of the natives of North America made a great impression for at that time the people of the Americas were believed to have been created or evolved there autochthonously, i.e. separately from the rest of mankind, and Petitot's views opened up new horizons. His evidence consisted mostly of oral traditions, basic similarities of languages and certain customs. Since then the theory of the Asiatic origin of American natives has been supported by archeological and other direct evidence, it has become generally accepted and is almost commonplace, but it was novel and controversial in the 1870's. During his stay in France, Petitot also arranged for the publication of much of his geographical and ethnological material, partly under the auspices of the Geographical Society of Paris, and also with the support of a well-to-do patron. He returned to Canada in 1876 and to his mission at Fort Good Hope in the following year. He stayed there until June 1878. Thereafter his movements became somewhat difficult to trace, he seems to have stayed for relatively short periods at various missions in Northern Alberta and Saskatchewan, and he took a vigorous part in the building of one of these. His mental health appears to have broken down during this period and he was sent back to France in 1883. Before that, in 1882, the authorities of his Order decided, evidently against Petitot's wishes (letter to Father Lacombe October 5, 1900 from Marceuil les Meaux, Diocesan Archive Edmonton) that because of his health, he must resign from his Order and enter the secular clergy. Once back in France, he became the parish priest of Marceuil les Meaux near Paris and lived there quietly until his death. He took part in and published on the results of some archeological excavations in his parish.

It was during these years that he published most of his travel books. These were books with such titles (in translation) as: Fifteen years on the Arctic Circle, 1889; Around Great Slave Lake, 1891; Exploration of Great Bear Lake, 1893; and the most entertaining of all on the Eskimos of the Mackenzie and Anderson Rivers originally published in 1887 and translated here. All are eminently readable--Petitot has a gift for light humour. Most of these books are illustrated by reproductions of his interesting sketches. When,

as in this book, a professional artist worked over Petitot's drawings, some of their authenticity is lost, resulting, e.g. in pictures of Eskimo women too pretty, in the European taste, to be believable, or dogs which bear little resemblance to huskies.

Though Petitot's artistic skill is limited when he portrays people, he is more convincing in landscapes and a view of Fort Edmonton he painted about 1867 (the original of which is still in the building of the Alberta Legislature) is reproduced in J.R. Harper's "Painting in Canada," 1966.

Though ill health had abruptly ended Petitot's career as an explorer, the results of his period of intense activity in the Mackenzie received due recognition. He was elected a member of the Academie Francaise, the Geographical Society of London awarded him the Back Prize in 1883, and in Canada a river of the Southern Territories and Northern Alberta, which he was the first white man to navigate over a hundred years ago, is named after him.

Petitot died at Marceuil during the first World War on the 13th of May, 1916.

E. Otto Höhn  
Edmonton, Alberta  
December 1979

## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

My aim has been to give as nearly as possible a literal translation of Petitot's writing (only a very few of his most flowery sentences have been pruned to conform to modern taste) and thus to preserve his distinctly nineteenth century mode of writing. This may appear quaint and old-fashioned to some readers but Petitot's style is one of the attractions of his works.

His rendering of native words whether in Eskimo, Hare Indian or Loucheux (Kutchin) has been preserved unchanged with but five exceptions. The name of the Eskimo tribe about which he writes, is spelled Chiglit instead of Tchiglit, and the words inuit, umiak, kayak and igloo are so given in the spelling customary in English. The reader who would attempt to sound Petitot's native words should remember that he writes what he heard as if it were French thus, e.g. his vowel ou represents either the English oo as in wool if long, or oo as in took if short.

However, French accents have been reproduced only in French words, not in Petitot's writing of words in native North American languages. This admittedly removes certain guides to pronunciation, but it was felt that very few readers will want to read just how certain Indian or Eskimo words sounded to Petitot. Those who have had contact with people who speak the languages in question will agree that no simple written version can fully and accurately represent the native speech.

Where I have felt it necessary to make a brief comment on Petitot's text or to clarify a point, this has been done by an insertion in square brackets to distinguish such items from Petitot's (rare) use of standard brackets. Where a larger comment seemed necessary a raised number in the text refers the reader to the notes which follow the translation.

AMONG THE CHIGLIT ESKIMOS





## INTRODUCTION

This volume is not for the young, for they would not find models of conduct among the Eskimos.

The human virtues which these hyperboreans possess are not those which we hold up for the imitation of well-bred, moral and Christian adolescents. Let us leave the virtues of the Eskimos to the contemplation of men of the world. Only they may find salutary examples there, if not in a positive sense, then at least models as of absurdity.

But a travel book does not set out to be a second edition of "the school of morals." To make mine acceptable I have tried to stick to the unvarnished truth.

I have not felt it necessary to mitigate bad aspects or to take an optimistic view in opposition to the facts, in order to avoid offending the prude.

Rather, I shall charge these who are scandalized by these pages with pharisaism, for they do not appreciate the capacity of a bad character, initially so far below us in moral level, for improvement by teaching and example.

We are civilized Christians, yet if we were to follow the Anti-Christian maxims which some, these days, are trying to impress on the French people we would be much less than that.

It is just as well we are worth more than we would be if we were really to adopt these new fangled views. This volume is neither a work of the imagination nor a translation from English. It is a small part of the record of my journeys during twenty-one years of residence in British North America, most of them spent on the Arctic Circle. I intend to publish the account of these years item by item. The accomplishment of this plan will depend on the reception accorded to the present volume.

Hereafter in relating my long wanderings in the other hemisphere I shall proceed in chronological order. Four years of travel preceded the journeys among the Anderson and Mackenzie Eskimos related here. Sixteen years of other northern travels followed. This volume therefore relates events which took place between 1862 and 1883.

I have made it my task to omit nothing of importance, to record everything as in a ship's log, neither to exaggerate nor to diminish, so as not to merit the French Canadian label of "lying like a traveller."

If this dishonourable epithet has been merited by some unscrupulous Coureurs de bois I hope that my own account of voyages will give it the lie.

The public will judge.

Now, a word of explanation to the reader about my presence at Fort Anderson in 1865. Having left France early in 1862 I travelled to the western extremity of Great Slave Lake where the Mackenzie River leaves the lake to form the first of its rapids.

I stayed there until March of the following year, not without having first made several journeys on this inland fresh water sea. I traversed it six times before moving to the mission of St. Joseph on Moose Island [now called Mission Island] within sight of Fort Resolution where I stayed until August 1864 when I travelled by boat to Fort Good Hope, the objective of my eager wishes and the seat of the mission to which I'd been assigned by the bishop.

In the spring of the year before I had already had the distinction of being the first [white person] to visit the vast semidesert country of the Dogrib Indians which extends between Great Slave and Great Bear Lakes.

It was Fort Good Hope which I left on March 7, 1865 to visit as the first French or English missionary to the Eskimos of the Anderson River and Liverpool Bay. I have related an incident of the outward journey, made with a French Canadian employee of the Hudson's Bay Company post at Good Hope, who was an excellent man, father of a patriarchal family, whose friendship I regard as an honour, in the Journal des Voyages (No. 496). The narrative which forms the first part of this volume begins at Fort Anderson.

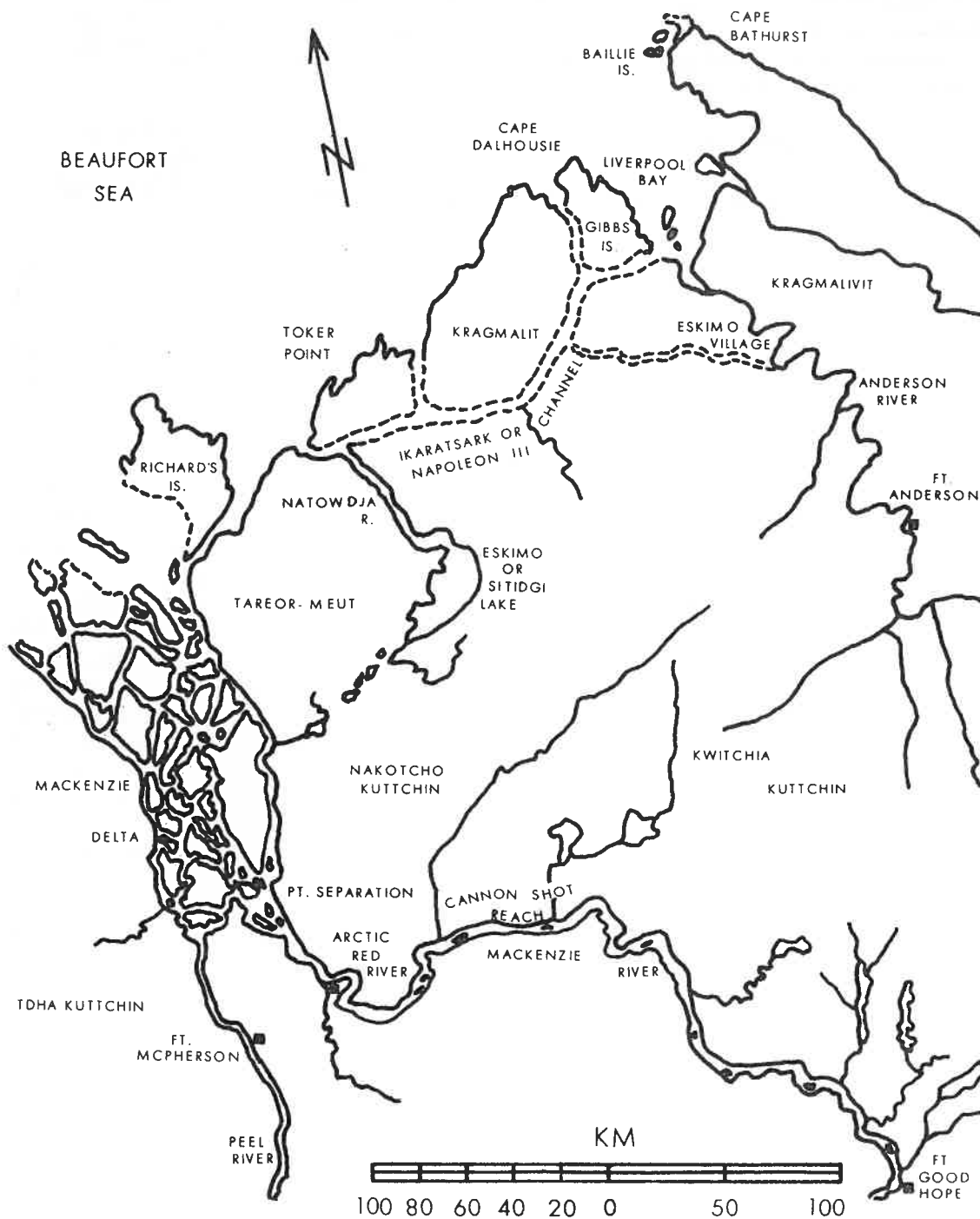
After my unexpected and undesired return to Fort Good Hope, I left that place once more on the 22nd of October with the same objective as before but I was even less successful. An epidemic which decimated the entire Indian population of the northwest prevented me from pursuing my evangelical efforts among the Eskimos. I had to turn my attention instead to the Loucheux who were hunting in the area of the Eskimo Lake. I shall not relate that journey in this work which deals with the Inuit only.

On returning to Fort Anderson I left again almost immediately for the country of the Bastard Loucheux or "people of the end of the world." I explored the course of the upper Anderson River and the vast barren grounds, dotted with lakes and teeming with caribou, which extend from that river to Fort Good Hope, but the reader should not be discouraged by the idea of reading the story of events now twenty years old. The trend towards uniformity which Europeans spread over all varieties of mankind has not yet penetrated to the far north. In fact, one might say that the polar world now is still very much as

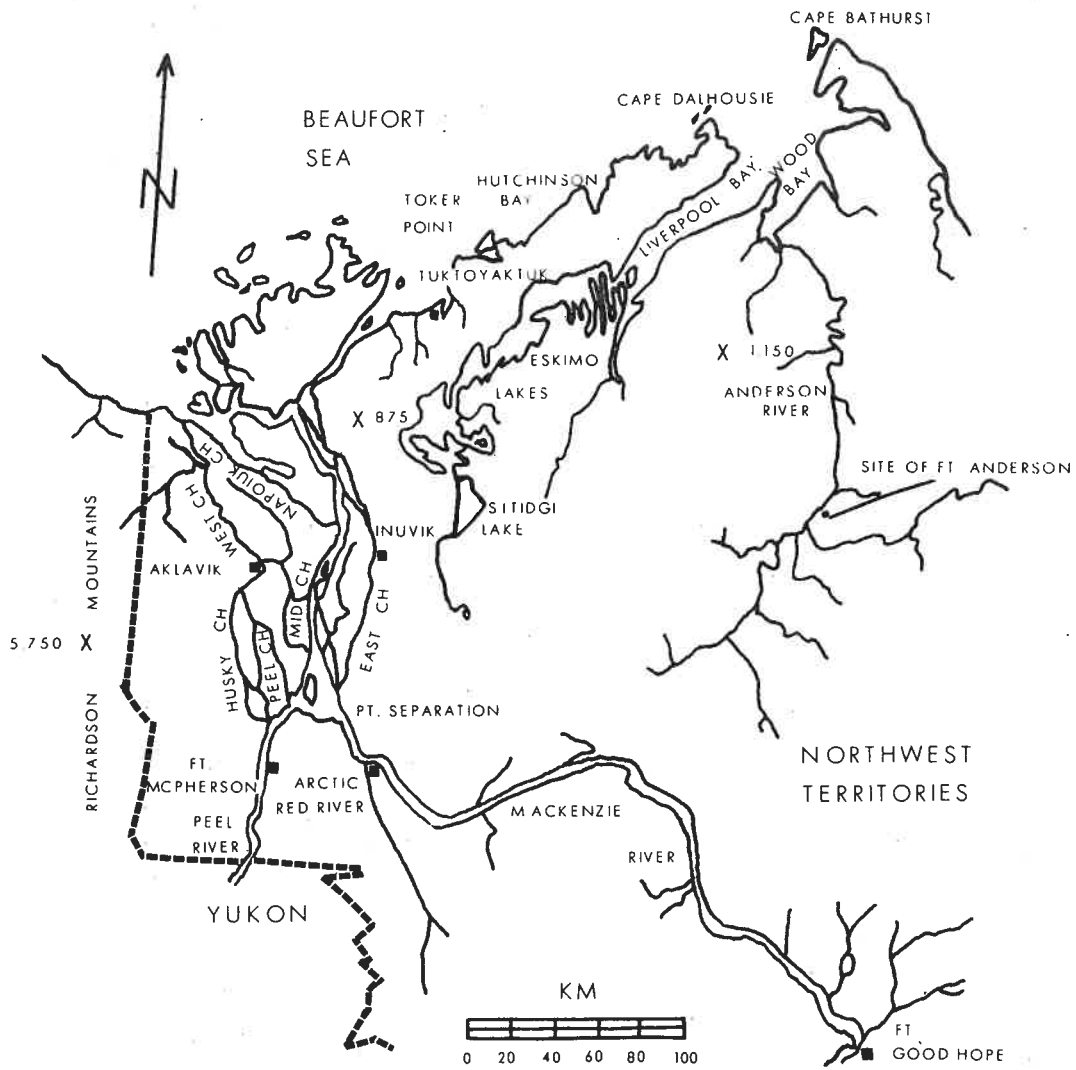
it was when I first arrived there. If the Loucheux and Denes have learnt how to build log cabins from the whites, how to play the violin, to wear cloaks of black cloth and tartan shawls, the Eskimos have wisely kept their ancient traditional dress and the customs of their ancestors. You will find them today as they were in 1865. Ensconced in their semi-subterranean dwellings, wrapped in their furs like angora cats, happily sipping seal oil and devouring long slices of pink ortchok [blubber].

This *nec plus ultra* of Eskimo happiness will, alas, last for a long time yet. The reader need not feel that he will be infected by its principles unless he fears the contagious effect of a bad example. That would not please God.

Emile Petitot  
Presbytery of Mareuil les Meaux  
January 21, 1887



Portion of Petitot's map from "Les Grands Esquimaux"  
Compare with the modern map, page 5.



Modern sketch map of the area involved in Petitot's travels described in this book. Elevations marked "X" are in feet.



BOOK 1. MY FIRST WINTER EXCURSION TO THE ESKIMOS OF THE ARCTIC COAST

CHAPTER I. AT FORT ANDERSON

Fort Anderson. — Noulloumallok Innonarana. — Eskimo customs. — Fashion depends on imagination. — General Bottom my cook. — Preparations for departure to the Arctic Ocean. — Generosity and hospitality of chief factor R. MacFarlane.

In March 1865 I found myself at Fort Anderson, also known as "the fort of the Eskimos," a trading post eighty leagues to the northeast of Fort Good Hope at latitude  $68^{\circ}30'$  north on the right bank of the river Sio-Tchro Endjig, or "river of the inconnu fish" [now called Anderson River].

Do not look for it on maps, you will not find it marked. It was then the most northerly white man's habitation and the one most remote from the other forts of the powerful Hudson's Bay Company. It had been constructed two years earlier by Mr. MacFarlane, who was also in command there during my stay. It was abandoned by the company in 1866, so that apart from Mr. MacFarlane and his Scottish or Orcadian company servants, I am the only European and certainly the only Frenchman ever to have visited this remote spot.

Mr. MacFarlane had named his fort after chief factor Anderson, a participant in the search for Sir John Franklin. But the popular name "Fort of the Eskimos" prevailed.

Its position on the banks of the Sio-Tchro River made it the natural meeting place for three different peoples, the Chiglit Eskimo, the Loucheux and the Bastard Loucheux who called themselves Nne lla Gottine - people of the end of the world. The muddy river flows swiftly along the bottom of a deep defile with sterile banks of bare ridges with here and there a clump of stunted spruce. The sun does not show its glorious face from November to February and the thermometer falls as low as  $-56^{\circ}\text{F}$  at times for several days on end. At present, Fort Anderson is a mere ruin. At the time of my visit it had a square pallisade with sides 50 metres long flanked at each corner by towers 6 metres high with loopholes, which latter were never used. A raised gallery ran along the inside of the pallisade to enable the defenders to shoot down at any assailants in case of an attack by the fierce Eskimos. This gallery, or platform, joined the towers to the square block house, a higher wooden tower through which passed the main gate. This tower was topped by a terrace where the Union Jack waved from the top of a solitary flagstaff.

Three buildings made from large squared logs were placed in the interior of the square, none was higher than the pallisade. The master's house stood to the rear, the servants' house and the warehouses for furs and provisions stood to either side. Scaffolds or



Nouloumallok-Innonarana  
Chief of the Kragmaliveit Eskimos of Liverpool Bay  
from a sketch by Petitot



stages on which smoked meat and fish were dried joined these buildings to one another. On these stages I saw, in March, some sleds, two kayaks and the frame of an umiak.

Completing this picture was a large cage raised on posts to one side of the yard which held some captive eagles, while fifteen large, white, silky-haired Eskimo dogs with pointed and sensitive fox-like snouts were roaming about the doors of the buildings tasting the leftovers thrown out to them.

Such was Fort Anderson where I had already been staying for a week when on March 16th two Eskimos arrived who had come from the Arctic Ocean, four day's march away.

One of them was the great headman of the Chiglit, Noulloumallok Innonarana, an almost Japanese-sounding name - better known among the English as Powderhorn. He was a very good-looking, tall man with a pleasant, almost white face. He was dressed in an elegant caribou skin costume, hair to the outside, which had been pieced together with great care. I can compare its shape only to that of the doublets of our ancestors of the time of Henry IV [of France]. His parka, breeches and tight-fitting boots of brown summer caribou skin were edged with a triple strip of otter, white wolf and wolverine fur, the long reddish hairs of the latter on his hooded collar forming a sort of fiery halo about his head. Similar strips of fur were sewn around his sleeves and the legs of his trousers below the knees. Another strip of fur ending over the forehead with the head of a grimacing wolf covered his, largely shaved, head which he could also cover with a hood made from the skin of a caribou head decorated with the animal's ears and rudimentary horns.

I will not represent this costume as peculiar to his tribe of Eskimos or as that peculiar to their chief. There is a great variety of dress in the repertory of primitive people, Eskimos included. Indians, generally so conservative and so attached to the customs of their ancestors, do not in the matter of dress recognize a fashion or an official costume. Before adopting our type of clothing each one tried to distinguish himself in his dress from the rest by inventing eccentric or even ridiculous items of apparel.

But the Eskimos have remained as they were. We only imitate the dress styles of primitives twice a year, at the Mardi Gras carnival and in mid-Lent. Only then do we dare to use some initiative in matters of costume and take some pride in its perfection, though it may consist of but a false nose or a calf's head mask.

But for the Eskimo, every day is one of carnival in this regard. I'm convinced that they glory in their appearance and that their prestige and their reputation for bravery among neighbouring peoples and even in the minds of Europeans is due to their attire. Deprive the inhabitant of the Arctic ice and snow of the long-haired bands of

fur which decorate his legs and arms, cut off the fringe of russet wolverine fur which surrounds his sardonic face, remove his talismans, the bird skins and animal tails hanging from his chest and back and dress him in the funereal garb of civilized man and you will see a timid creature, clumsy and shameful, despising himself and no doubt despicable. Nowhere but on the shores of the Arctic Ocean do fine clothes give such aplomb and confidence to those who wear them, and no doubt make them feel superior, full of honour and prestige.

Nor must we imagine that it is a monopoly and privilege of civilization that women's hats are decorated virtually with gardens, greenhouse products or exhibits of taxidermy. All the decorated artifacts which the fair sex in our countries uses nowadays - apricot bonnets, hats with stuffed parrots or wild ducks, etc., the Eskimos have used since time immemorial, perhaps in imitation of Anubis, Ammon and Bubastis of ancient Egypt.

I am, however, far from condemning this fashion. I feel it is sensible to use in human apparel whatever is beautiful, graceful and brilliant in the four kingdoms of nature. Only it would be desirable for the ladies not to have an exclusive monopoly on the use of such items in their dress. Were not our ancestors who wore the heads of lions, wolves or bears as helmets, more martial than we are with our frightful chimney pots [top hats] which have no use beyond deforming our skulls.

I had heard earlier from Mr. MacFarlane that ever since his first contact with the Eskimos, he had found Noulloumallok uncontrollable. He could not be allowed into any of the buildings without stealing or getting up to some mischief. Once he had even threatened the good factor with a knife.

But trade has the effect of smoothing rough characters. Greed for gain rather than truthfulness makes the most violent hold themselves in check and induces villains to control their ferocity. Self-interest often precedes moral motives and opens up a path for them which, unaided, they would take much longer to find.

However, I, poor physiognomist that I must be, was inspired to such confidence in Innonarana by his urbanity, his ease and jolliness and his airs of a grand seigneur, that I decided to follow this great man to the shores of the polar sea. I confided this decision to my excellent host at table. He raised many objections to my proposed trip. Innonarana was the most wicked bad lot among the Eskimos of Liverpool Bay. If I left with him I would be quite alone among these barbaric people; in a month's time he was going to send his interpreter with a clerk to the coast to barter for furs - I could travel with these two instead. I was totally ignorant of the language of a violent people used to sticking a knife in the belly of a person who contradicted them when they were in a rage, over so simple a matter that amongst ourselves it would only lead to a cuff or slap.

But nothing shook my resolution.

When Mr. MacFarlane saw that I was resolved to carry out my plan, he did everything in his power to facilitate it.

He said "The Eskimos must not see you preparing your meals, driving your dogs, making your bed - in short you must not travel like an ordinary person, like a servant of the Company for example. That would really reduce your image in their eyes and we here would feel the consequences of this on the rebound.

I shall give you a young Loucheux Indian who speaks a little Eskimo and who understands a good deal more. He is intelligent, honest and loyal. His name, for he is a Christian, is Alphonse Sida-Jen but I've nicknamed him General Bottom quite some time ago. He will be very useful to you and you can keep him as long as you please."

This kind gentleman also put a dog team at my disposal and had the sled loaded with the best provisions available - pemmican, dried meat, caribou tongues, flour, rice, sugar, chocolate, tea, coffee, and raisins - a real grocery shop. All this the amiable and generous man offered spontaneously without any request from me and without the expectation of any payment on his part. Had a Frenchman been in his place, he would have thwarted me to the best of his ability.

But Mr. MacFarlane did still more for me. He secretly gave Noulloumallok five wolverine pelts, worth twenty beaver skins, to induce the chief to defend me from affronts and from possible attacks by his people.

This act on this officer's part demonstrated his delicate and lofty sentiments. No doubt he thought I would be in real peril during my days among the Eskimos and he sought in this way to guard me in my youthful inexperience of people (I was 25 at the time) and to surround me with such solicitude as should prevent those robbers from taking advantage of my isolation.

"You are taking" he told me with a half-serious, half-jocular air, "a step which indicates more courage and zeal on your part than prudence. As far as I know you are the first European who has ventured among the Eskimos unarmed. I've never done that and I shall never do it either.

Not only have I advised you to not to make this trip, but I have done everything to persuade you against it.

If you're not scared, all will go well. But if you show fear, or even mere timidity or irresolution, you will commit a great wrong against yourself and also against all of us, for it is our assurance

amongst these wretches which gives us our prestige and our only security."

"Don't worry," I replied. "What need I fear from the Eskimos? They delight me, I like primitive people and I will make them realize it. Again, what is there for me to fear?"

"That's good" he said. "I'm not the one to doubt your courage and devotion, but there is a difference, a great difference, between Eskimos and Indians, whether Loucheux or Denes. These latter people are naive, simple, gentle, patient, chaste, resigned and without malice. They only irritate us at times by their vanity, their boorishness and sometimes by their lack of honesty. Here you will be dealing with people who are robbers, the scum of the sea, real evil thugs whose wives and daughters are shameless courtesans. To these people theft, violence, fraud, unrestrained lechery and even murder are human virtues in which they pride themselves. I don't know why Arctic explorers have described them in such glowing colours; but you will see for yourself, the Eskimos are pretty sorry specimens of humanity.

Now that I've done all I can to dissuade you from a project so far without precedent, I accede to your formally expressed desire. Try to do them as much good as you can and may God protect you among those wicked people."

Such were his wishes as I said goodbye to my noble friend.

## CHAPTER II. ON THE ANDERSON RIVER

Travelling on the ice. — Eskimo dog teams. — A scarcely honourable vade-mecum. — Malayan type pipes. — Building a snow house. — A scientist's error. — The golden age in the Arctic. — The secret of life among the polar ice. — Eskimo types. — The great man, Son of the sun.

Thus on March 18, 1865, I found myself at nine in the morning once more on the frozen surface of the Anderson River, running behind General Bottom, who ran behind Innonarana, the great man who, like a simple mortal, was running behind Iyoumatounak, the "itchy one."

Two sleds, pulled by dogs, were running among us. One of them, its bottom raised above the runners, was mine; the other, low and squat, belonged to the two Eskimos.

This is the order of the march of the Indians at all seasons. They can think of no other. For several people to travel abreast seems supremely ridiculous to them. The most worthy person in the band is at the head, the rest follow in Indian file. This is also the arrangement of geese and cranes on the wing, [these more commonly fly in a  $\Lambda$  formation] of caribou on migration and of bison when they move from one pasture to another. It is how horses travel when set free and able for a while to return to their natural ways.

The sled of the Chiglit Eskimo consists of wooden crossbars which rest on two runners of roughly squared wood. They are heavy and ungraceful and their least fault is that they sink deep into the snow making ruts which tire out the dogs.

To replace up to a point the steel band which civilized people put on their sled runners, the Eskimos, poor in everything but inventiveness, ice their runners. But as the ice is worn down by friction they are forced every two or three hours to turn the sled over to replenish the coating of the runners with a pad soaked in water which, as it freezes, they polish with their mittens of walrus or polar bear skin.

The process is ingenious but takes a long time and is tiring for water must first be procured and this means breaking through the sea ice or that over a river which may be 5 to 10 feet thick, a task which takes more time and labor than the actual putting on of a new coating of ice. So it is no use being in a hurry when travelling with Eskimos.

Five or six fox-like dogs are attached to the clumsy sled, not in a row head to tail, nor by means of a leather harness, but side by side, each dog tied by a line round its neck which then passes under his belly and to the sled. If this does not strangle the poor beasts it must certainly hurt them. Fortunately the Eskimos are patient and don't try to make racing units out of their teams. They drive them by using a whip and also by stimulating their animals out of their

laziness or playfulness by frequent cries of Koua! Koua! accompanied by the imprecation, atouwa! when a good pull is required.

The sedentary nature of these plump people is evident at such times. They are far from having the dry, solid but nervous legs, the loins of steel and the camel's stomachs of the Indians, those Bedouins of America. The Eskimo travels clumsily leaning on his stick, moaning and dragging his legs, ever stopping and always finishing by settling himself on the sled in spite of the load it already carries.

Thus these polar sybarites need comforts such as the northern Indians can easily do without. They travel with all their kitchen utensils, with a veritable store of fur robes, with pots and cauldrons, seal oil lamps, spare boots and clothes, with playthings for the brats, food, and above all, with a certain vessel without a lid, a *vade-mecum*,<sup>2</sup> for them the highest necessity, as indispensable as if they ate from it.

Some malicious travellers have even claimed that this ignominious pot does in fact serve a double purpose. But I must deny this. Though I've seen Eskimos washing themselves in urine, I must state that they are too refined not to draw a distinction between a soup tureen and a chamber pot.

At noon we reached the barren grounds and stopped for a meal. My two Eskimo companions ate smoked fish dipped in the oil of the white whale. General Bottom having prepared my meal, I shared it with him. I am perhaps the first Frenchman to have had the honour to have a General as his manservant.

I offered my two Inuit a buttered roll and a cup of coffee. They ate the butter for they took it to be melted musk ox marrow but refused the rest with the murmured comment "Kimnartoat! - medicine!"

This put Sida-Jen and me at our ease. There is nothing more embarrassing than to eat good food in front of others with whom one cannot share it. It reduces one's pleasure and one is tempted to hide like a thief. Now we were sure not to arouse the envy of our companions, neither did they arouse ours.

The meal was followed by a smoke. Seeing the Eskimos handle their pipes one cannot doubt that the ancestors of these people must have known eastern Asia and, who knows, perhaps even the Malay Archipelago. Their pipes are Malayan in shape, almost like opium pipes. A small bowl on a neck is joined to a stem or shank made of two pieces tied together or joined by rings.

Pipes of similar shape, material and use are found throughout Alaska and among the Ingaliiks, the Kamtchatkans, the Chukchee, the Siberian Eskimos, the Kurile islanders, the Chinese and the Malays.

However, here tobacco replaces opium; it is introduced with a pinch of caribou hairs torn from the parka, with which the bowl is first partly filled. The resulting mixture, the smoke of which the Eskimos swallow in greedy mouthfuls, is exhaled with the most noxious odour which can emerge from a human mouth.

The operation concluded, the Eskimo, haggard, trembling, out of breath and bathed in perspiration, gathers his wits, distracted as they are by the effects of what he has absorbed, and swallows a cupful of fresh water, which restores him. I've seen some smokers who became pale and fainted away with their eyes turned up and others who experienced agonies. But these accidents which must be prejudicial to health, don't serve to warn them off this manner of smoking.

It is noteworthy that a people who live at the other end of the earth, the Patagonians, smoke in the same manner. This habit is encountered again among the Scythians and Sarmatians, the warriors of these pelagic peoples, according to Maximus of Tyre, "assembled around a fire to swallow the smoke of a green plant" which may have been tobacco or the poppy.

What I do know for certain is that the Chiglit Eskimos of the mouth of the MacKenzie River received the custom from the Behring Sea Eskimos, from whom they also derive the custom of piercing their cheeks in order to insert labrets of marble, jade or porphyry.

The central and eastern Eskimos do not know this custom at all.

At the double confluence of two lesser rivers with the Anderson we had an encounter which greatly pleased our two hosts. We were about to camp here and to build a snow hut or igloriyoark, for the night when we found one being built by two strong young men, Tchiatsiark and Taveyanark.

What would I have done had I known they were two murderers? But I did not know, just as I was ignorant of so much else which made for my feelings of assurance and security. As these men had a stone lamp and fresh whale oil for it, two items which Noulloumallok lacked, it was decided that we would all share their snow hut. I thought it would be a tight squeeze for six people but I was told we would be all the warmer for that.

When the dogs were let loose we all set-to to finish the alabaster dome of our dwelling. I wanted to take part and warm myself a bit by working but I remembered Mr. MacFarlane's directions. To maintain my dignity I had to refrain from any kind of work, so I kept myself from freezing as I stood there by stamping my feet with all my strength.

The prospect of spending the night without fire under that large cheese dish of snow did not appeal to me very much. I was afraid of

freezing there and the idea of close contact with men as malodorous as these Eskimos seemed revolting. Their smell makes one's gorge rise.

Noticing in a ravine across the river an isolated clump of spruce I was seized by an inordinate desire to spend the night there and I told General Bottom about my wish.

The poor fellow guessed my reasons well enough but prudence induced him to oppose my design.

For some time I'd taken a lively interest in the construction of the snow hut. With their long knives which they always carry, two Eskimos cut blocks shaped like keystones from the hardened snow on top of the river ice while a third one carried them to the chosen site where he arranged them along a spiral, trimming the blocks with his knife so that they fitted together more or less. Meanwhile the chief scattered water over these materials which, freezing instantly, solidified them and sealed them hermetically. In less than an hour the dome was completed, a proper keystone completing the little Pantheon which was abundantly doused with water and then pelted with clods of powdery snow.

With three knife strokes a door about 30 cm square was cut in the wall of the hive; while one of the travellers built a small snow wall to protect the door from the wind, another placed some sticks side by side on the floor, formed by the river ice, and spread some polar bear and caribou skins on them. This gave us a raised platform on which two or at best three people could stretch out or four could sit but no one would have conceived that six could be accommodated there. To the right of the platform and beside the entrance the indispensable, boat-shaped blubber lamp was placed.

To the left stood the equally important krorkvik. Here, as always this indispensable vessel, which should always be covered, stayed exposed. The thought that a smoky lamp would be our kitchen stove and that the same room would serve as dining room, smoking room, bedroom and public latrine was enough to upset me. I felt I was unfortunate. So it was with ill-disguised disgust that I crawled into the snow house. The chief, after having beaten the snow out of his clothes for the twentieth time since our departure from the fort, took one corner of the platform. I was allocated the other. These are the places of honour. The other gentlemen placed themselves as best they could. Then someone pulled back into place the block of snow which had been cut out to make the doorway, water was run over its edges and as it froze we were sealed off from the outside apart from the pores of the granular snow which composed the walls.

The first thing I noticed about the Eskimos once the door was closed was that they were examining me with curiosity, all of them in a spontaneous movement. What were they thinking? Were they



wondering whether I was afraid? Of what? I could have got free of the place by hurling myself, head-first, against the snow wall.

Were they looking for signs of admiration for their skills in building the igloo? That seemed more probable. I did admire them but I was too cold to utter cries of enthusiasm. I was shivering and I asked Sida-Jen to light a fire near the door of the snow house. "No, no" said the chief, "have a little patience 'Kratetsey,' you'll soon be as warm as you want to be; do just as we do."

And giving me his example Innonarana put himself into the garb of Adam before the Fall. All the rest except General Bottom and myself followed his example. A redskin never exposes himself before a third person for all the gold in the world, but I imitated the rest to the extent of shedding all but my shirt and trousers, and I was soon so hot that I took off my footwear and remained bare-footed.

Noulloumallok then arranged some little wooden rods above the stone lamp in which he'd placed about six or eight wicks of moss soaked in seal oil. He placed some lumps of whale blubber on the grid formed by the rods, so that by melting in the heat of the burning wicks below, the oil in the lamp should be continually replenished.

Thanks to the small flame of the lamp and the hot effluvia from the bodies of my companions my blood circulation was fully restored in less than ten minutes, and I was soon so hot that I called out loudly for some cool air and for room for I seemed to be suffocating.

The temperature was soon at least 30°C in our cabin of snow, now transformed into a stove, and its walls began to sweat like the windows of an overheated apartment. They became converted into semi-opaque ice through which we could see the light of the moon.

At the world exhibition in Paris a distinguished scholar published an article on the Eskimos in the "Correspondant" in which he referred to my journey. He was kind enough to send me a copy to Fort Good Hope for which I owe him thanks.

But his description is in error when he believed that when sealing our door a little gap to allow a circulation of air had been left, for he could not conceive how else six people could stay in the igloo without vitiating the air inside. His difficulty was because he thought of it as an ice hut; but igloos are built of hardened snow which, unlike ice, is porous. It is Father Bresciani in his book "House of Ice" who has contributed to the spread of this misconception in France, in a work which for those who have lived on the Arctic Circle is full of unspeakable errors.

The walls of an igloo though possibly almost as hard as sandstone, are porous enough for the warm air of the interior to flow

out. A proof of this is that the dogs can get warm by lying on the roof of the structure. It is enough for the number of occupants to be proportional to the size of the snow house for it to become as comfortable as is desirable at such latitudes. The evaporation of ice from the floor and of snow from walls is enough to allow the air to be renewed and for one's lungs, once accustomed to the place, to function freely.

Let us, therefore, pardon the rhetoric of the scholar, Augustin Cochin, who thought he had to correct what seemed to him a scientific error on my part, and who believed there must be some air vents about the door of an igloo.

This is a case where the academician's rhetoric triumphed over the rigor and exactitude of science; here his muse made him forget physics.

He wrote, "Come night, storm or rain, hail or avalanche, the ice house resists everything and the warmth of its interior sustains life."

It is hardly necessary to go to great lengths to prove that at temperatures that vary from 40° to 58° or 60°C below zero at 68° or 70° north latitude and in mid-winter, there is no rain or hail.

Evidently the scholar experienced a fairly marked spell of absent-mindedness, for it must be admitted that he had strange ideas of the climate of the Arctic. Apart from all that, would an ice hut withstand rain? It would surely melt and fall in on its inhabitants. A certain Arctic navigator when he found himself in an analogous position to mine, could not suppress exclamations of admiration of the good Eskimos, among whom he thought he had found the innocence and the paradisaical candour of our ancestors. I will not pronounce on the degree of ingenuity and innocence of the Inuit. I will let the reader judge for himself. All I will say is that when in my presence in the costume of Adam, they were no more embarrassed than if they had four paws and a bushy tail.

Have you seen, if only in a picture, Neapolitans eating macaroni? It will give you an idea of the elegant way in which the Eskimos eat their blubber. Cut into long strips they dangle it above the mouth which holds one end of the strip. Then with smacking lips, they bite on a portion and cut it off so close to the mouth they seem in imminent danger of cutting their lips or nose. When I watched them I was always afraid a bit of nose might be sliced off.

The blubber is greenish and opaque. I've tasted it. In its lack of savour it approaches the taste of olive oil. Had they boiled it I would not have found it repugnant. But that is heresy to them. Whale blubber is always eaten raw. When I asked them for some of it cooked, Innonarana handed me one of the slices from above the lamp,

handing it over with the most gracious gesture. I refused it with disgust and must have seemed incomprehensibly capricious to them.

The chief's round face and the no less circular one of the scabby Iyoumatounak lit up when the two others who had come from the Coast told them that, during the preceding fall, a storm had thrown a whale ashore on Liverpool Bay; that several families had been living on the carcass and that there was still a lot of it left.

At once our hosts cried out with one voice that they would move their households to this wonderful spoil. Innonarana, who could hardly control his joy, was jubilant when describing the delights of a good meal of whale meat and above all those of whale blubber which makes the Eskimos so paunch-bellied and chubby. It is a fact that a diet consisting largely of oil and fat is the secret which enables the hyperboreans to endure intense cold with impunity. It furnishes their bodies with a thick layer of fat which even more than their fur clothing enables their vital organs to respond to such a mortal climate.

Well functioning organs are the best producers of body heat, and blood sustained by such fatty material can have a greater heating effect than we realize. My hosts poured seal oil over their blubber. Not only could I not stand the taste of this oil, even the smell of it was too much for me. This oil must be stored in seal intestines and exposed to the sun and to fermentation during the long days of summer. Compared to this brew, cod liver oil is a pleasant syrup. We need not be surprised, therefore, to find no emaciated Eskimos. They are all corpulent as nabobs and as fat as Lincolnshire pigs.

For dessert my companions swallowed the half-melted lumps of fat from the grid above the lamp and replaced them with fresh ones. The half consumed wicks were not despised either; they sucked them with a loud smacking of lips and tongue.

Why should this surprise us? It is but another proof of the mutability of taste once one is accustomed to some particular item from infancy. Don't our gourmets eat oysters and other shellfish raw? Don't they insist that venison be hung; until it is in a state of more or less advanced putrefaction? Are not sardines preserved in oil? Don't we eat cheeses which stink and may show movement? Don't we eat little birds roasted in their dung and so emulate the Eskimos by eating very strange items? I did not want to be impolite towards my hosts. Fortunately, superstition prevented them from tasting my provisions or a mutual exchange could have taken a long time.

However, Tchiasiark who had been to Fort MacPherson where he had eaten some of the Krablounet dishes, such as salted beef, ship's biscuits and butter and had tasted sugar, gave such an excellent account of these things as to be fatal from my point of view. Innonarana bravely tried one of my buttered rolls and gave another

to Iyoumatounak and both started to gnaw away like mice, murmuring in a honeyed voice, which with them must express the peak of surprise and stupefaction, "Kratsia, nakraptchi mamma!" "Man, is that ever good!"

Before me were three different types of faces. Noulloumallok's was broad but almost white and quite good-looking; his eyes were nearly horizontal. Taveyanark had a square nose, a pink colour like a European and a serious expression; perhaps he was a Scottish, or Russian, Eskimo halfbreed.

Iyoumatounak, the scabby one, was the colour of cafe-au-lait, with a flat face, a short snub nose, small oblique, bleary eyes and a treacherous, false air, like that of a Maltese sailor.

While Tchiasiark, with his great nose, his bright eyes and his reddish brown, bronze skin colour had an insolent and hypocritical air. He might have been taken for a Chipewyan.

All four, nevertheless, had Eskimo characteristics: the face almost circular, a large squarish head on a robust neck, a wide gaping mouth with pendulous lips, small crowded teeth, filed down to the gums, slanting reptilian eyes. Add to this a light little beard like that of Confucius, and goat-like eyebrows, and you have a complete picture of an Eskimo face. Doctor Kane's illustrations of the Greenland Eskimos are very faithful samples. The drawings of Sir George Back are not bad either, but those of the first-mentioned traveller are better.

The Chiglit Eskimo customarily shave their heads, leaving only a monklike tonsure of hair. They are of medium or above medium height and, because of this, the western Innuits are called the great Eskimos to distinguish them from those of the Arctic Islands, of Labrador and Greenland who, in height, resemble the Samoyeds and Lapps, those other Eskimos of our own hemisphere.

Their skin lacks the smooth, glabrous and lustrous pigmentation of that of the Indians. Indeed, it has the soft, dull porosity of that of Europeans. Their limbs don't show the nervous tension of those of redskins. Instead, their muscles seem to be slack, suggesting a lymphatic temperament, a scrofolous constitution and a tendency to skin infections due to the acridity of blood loaded with certain humours.

Their skin colour is neither white nor red, but rather a clear, olivaceous tint, such as one sees among Japanese, Spaniards or Portuguese.

Apart from their smell and their nudity in the snow house there is nothing disagreeable about the company of Eskimos. They converse with naive intelligence. Their childlike spirit is curious and eager

for instruction. They speak harmoniously in soft little voices, in short phrases interrupted by pauses, as it were sententiously. They articulate slowly and the others listen patiently. Each period, pronounced between the teeth or the lips with an air of importance and mystery, is followed by a pause which gives the speaker an opportunity to judge the effect of his words. Then the listeners with an air of amazement, open their eyes wide and open-mouthed utter a penetrating "Krale" which with them seems to express the epitome of admiration.

The savage in his speech, as well as in his conduct, seeks to make an impression, to make himself interesting. Nowhere else does the goddess of a hundred mouths have more adorers. These people are infatuated with themselves, their race, their customs, their country and all their doings. Evidently they believe themselves to be very distinguished.

On this occasion Innonarana told in detail of his visit to Fort Anderson; how kindly Mitchi Paloum (Mr. MacFarlane) had received him and of the valorous decision of Mitchi Pitchitork (Mr. Petitot) to go down to the Ocean to eat seal meat.

At this the slanting eyes of the two newcomers looked me over from head to foot and back again, inspecting me in detail, as if they'd never seen me before. Proud of the effect of his words, the chief told them not to push their examination too far; I was a Son of the sun, Tchikreynarm iyaye.

I protested strongly against this pompous, false and ridiculous title, explaining to the Eskimos that we considered the sun neither a god nor our father. But whether he believed I spoke from false modesty, as he himself would at times deny that he was a chief, or whether he feared to diminish the glory he would gain as the protector of the son of the sun, the good man did not abate in his use of this epithet for me, so transforming me, without any fault of mine, into a demigod.

As this cost me less than a title of nobility and was a safeguard for my and General Bottom's security, and since my new grandeur must greatly contribute to Noulloumallok's in the eyes of his compatriots, I did not push my protests far enough to become angry and to rend my garments in the Judaic fashion.

If one considers, the fame of all demigods had such an origin. All the same it is pleasant to have been treated as one once in one's life. The honour of such an apotheosis while one is still alive does not befall all mortals.

"Oh innok toyok, Oh great man!" the Eskimo Tchiatsiark, called out time and time again during the chief's discourse, while gently stroking my back as one strokes a temperamental animal so as not to anger it. "Oh, innok toyok."

Meanwhile the great man exercised his jaws in repeated yawns and Innonarana, himself a great man, at times displayed a fiery enthusiasm. Finally, we resolved to sleep.

Oh, I was unable to keep my eyes shut, or rather I slept so badly and feverishly that I seemed to pass from one nightmare into another. I felt stifled by my clothes, suffocated by the extreme heat, and compressed by my companions like a herring in a barrel, oppressed by the unpleasant miasma and the lack of pure, breathable air. How I suffered during that night.

I could only think of one way to help myself. That was to perforate the snow wall surrounding us at the risk of catching a cold in the head and exposing my companions to that risk as well. With my pocket knife, I effected a small hole and put my mouth to it to inhale some of the delicious fresh air from the outside. Thanks to this device, I eventually slept peacefully until the morning.

### CHAPTER III. CONTINUATION OF THE JOURNEY

The offensiveness of snow houses. — The Arctic desert. — The red mountains and Cape Bathurst. — Second overnight camp. — Snowstorm. — My companion's mistrust. — The blue fox. — An Eskimo village. — Grotesque costume of the Eskimo women.

How happy I was when daylight began to show through our crystal dome and rays of light penetrated it and played on the snow walls opposite, which by melting on the inner surface had become milky like an opal.

I left the snow house feeling rather like a chick emerging from the egg and finding itself in the fresh air. Eagerly I took in the cold morning air in deep gasps.

I left our infamous snow house with eagerness. Last night it had consisted of immaculate snow. Now it was a nauseating, malodorous latrine as offensive as a sewer.

Smells attach themselves strongly to this porous snow and penetrate it so deeply that such an igloo never loses the odours resulting from a single night's use. Attempts to improve matters by making holes in the walls for ventilation are defeated by indelible oily smells. These offensive odours are a plague which attaches itself to the snow walls, is incrusting on them by melting and is resistant to the most intense cold. Only the melting away of the whole fragile edifice purifies this filth, as the fires of purgatory purify the sinful soul.

Once more we travelled on the frozen Anderson River. Its narrow tortuous valley has banks 130 to 150 metres high which gradually became higher as we approached the sea, and so assumed along the east bank the aspect of a chain of hills of rosy-coloured granite or of diorite, which has caused them to be named "chie intsik" (the red mountains) by the Loucheux. Cape Bathurst forms the extremity of this range.

The range of cliffs at times comes close to the river when the bluffs, with slopes of talus at their feet, form something like ramparts. In other places the range is some hundreds of metres from the river and the banks of the latter are formed by sedimentary deposits bearing occasional stunted spruce and dwarf willows, the branches of which emerge without a trunk from the frozen soil. These last vestiges of trees emphasize the extreme desolation of this remote area. Death appears to be master here. One seems to feel his presence. He is in command and one is subject to him. It is the glory of the inhabitants of these regions in their daily struggle against death to tame him and crush him as if he were some fierce animal. There is a satisfaction in this struggle for life and it is this perhaps which attaches the Eskimos to the polar sea, its arid shores and icy affluents.

Though there are no trees on Arctic shores, wood is not lacking. The Anderson carries down vast quantities of driftwood during the open season, for its upper reaches are within the tree line. It deposits wood along its sandy or muddy shores, particularly on all points of land, and piles it up even more so at the coast where it forms deltas consisting of mud and enmeshed masses of driftwood which grow higher year by year.

Trunks not stranded on the banks of the river or on the coast drift far out to sea and end up on the shores of the Arctic islands far from the forests where the trees grow.

Thus many great rivers have been ordained by providence to scatter the riches of the plant life of their banks to the extremities of the earth. Nature is a good mother who compensates for the deficiencies of particular regions. The wealth of wood for fires and for building that is available on Eskimo shores makes the defiance of the mortal cold and the long winters of the Arctic possible.

Thus rivers like the majestic Mackenzie, the tortuous Anderson, the petulant Horton, the Coppermine with its Bloody Falls, the Back River, and others still unknown to the geographers, several of which I have named myself, pour their waters and the detritus of forests into the Arctic Ocean.

The more one approaches the ocean, the less is the depth of the snow and the thicker is the ice. If the winter is both very dry and rigorous, there is no snow at all. Thus the extremes are reached.

At sunset on the second day we reached the confluence of a large tributary from the red mountains with the Anderson. The Indians call it "Chie intsik nillen." A number of islands divide the stream of the Anderson over about two leagues of its course at this point.

General Bottom told me about a bloody event which took place here twelve or thirteen years ago.

"We were surprised by a band of Eskimos during the night and they killed five of my compatriots."

"How did you get away?" I asked him.

"Oh, I was only four or five years old at the time, but I remember it all as if it had happened yesterday."

"And were all the other Loucheux in that camp killed?" I asked.

"Oh no, only the five who did not wake up quickly enough to escape our enemies. At that time we were still stupid about the Eskimos. We had hunted and lived with those shaven heads and hoped



to soften their hearts and that, I think, shows that we lacked good sense."

"You believe the Eskimos are very fierce, then?"

"Oh chief," he said, "they are real wolves whom we shall never tame. They are too wild to live like people."

Yet the man who said this was himself what we call a savage.

"Are there never any marriages between your people and the Eskimos?" I asked him after a while.

"Proper marriages, never. As to sexual relationships, there have been several. There may be some of our blood in the veins of some of their children, I don't know. Yet there is not one Eskimo half-breed among the Loucheux. Among the Loucheux Hare Indian breeds, I know only one person who is reputed to have had an Eskimo father. The youngest son of Yekkeri-Winkkwin, he is called 'the Eskimo' for that reason."

One of the causes of hatred between the Loucheux Indians and the Eskimos is that the Indians call them "Anakren," meaning enemy feet in Loucheux, but in Eskimo this word means "Excrementers," and of course it arouses bad feelings amongst the Eskimos against their Loucheux neighbours.

We had to camp near the mouth of the tributary for my Eskimo hosts had built a snow house here on their way to the fort and counted on using it again. The wind had filled it with snow. Sida-Jen and I cleared it out with our snow shoes. All the same, it exhaled such a stench that I asked myself whether I could possibly make up my mind to spend the night there.

But there was no other choice, for there were no more trees in sight.

When Innonarana, who was following us, arrived, I was already shivering in spite of the exercise I had just had. I was in a hurry to see the igloo furnished with skins, to have the beneficent lamp lit and the door closed on us. With some trepidation the chief told us he had lent the lamp to the two young men who had turned away on another route, so that unless I had a lamp in my baggage he would have to make one.

Make a lamp! How could I survive the cold long enough to see it done. I'd turn into a lump of ice before then. However, it was a situation that simply had to be accepted.

In one of our treks over land between one bend of the river to another Noulloumallok had cut off a lump of wood. Now he carved it

roughly into the shape of a stone lamp, placed three pebbles he'd picked up on an islet in it, fashioned a wick out of three pinches of caribou hair, and the utensil was ready.

It was time for us to get into the shelter. My feet could not endure the cold from the ice on which we were standing any longer.

As we were less crowded than during the night before, I had a refreshing and uninterrupted sleep.

Before going to sleep I had given Iyoumatounak some camphor ointment for him to rub on his scabby pate. What a bedroom companion he was.

During the night a strong wind came up. Coming down from the white range of hills in gusts and squalls and finding no obstacles in the wide valley, it swept up the snow lying on the river ice and piled it in banks three metres high on three sides of our snow house, covering our dogs in its icy layers.

The river ice under the pressure of the wind vibrated so strongly we feared it might open up beneath us. This does sometimes happen. I've seen one of these cracks suddenly open up almost under our feet as we were crossing Great Wolverine Lake the following November. Water rushed out of the crack like an artesian well, but with the appearance of wide and long waves which spread out over the surface of the ice. Our dogs had to swim and we ourselves could only cross the crack by lying down on our bellies on the sleds and, of course, getting soaked.

This time, however, we got away with a mere scare. Gases which gather between the river and the ice caused thunder-like detonations and loud rumblings all through the night. The ice gave forth loud cracks. It trembled and shivered as if about to split, but that is all that happened. But it gave me some idea how volcanic phenomena arise.

The sun was high in the sky when our lazy Eskimos resigned themselves to getting out of our dwelling. To do so, we had to dig what amounted to a small tunnel through the snowdrift which covered it, in the course of which we uncovered our dogs, who had been literally buried alive in the powdery snow. It did not seem to have upset them. No doubt they had had a softer and warmer sleep than usual under the snow.

During this third day out from Fort Anderson, we passed a bifurcation of the river into two channels. We followed the main one. The other runs, according to the Eskimos, into a great salt water channel (or "ikaratsark") which separates the so-called Nicholson Island from the mainland. [There is no such channel. Nicholson "Island" is, in fact, a peninsula.] I named this channel

after the emperor, Napoleon III, who was then still in his glory. This channel has not been seen or explored by any white traveller.

At this point we sledged over the land for another stretch. The country here was fearfully barren. No trace of a tree, no willows, no brush. Only snow-covered slopes to right and left. Sepulchral cliffs of desolate mountains, which resembled a chain of gigantic icebergs with jagged peaks, steep declivities and almost perpendicular precipices, rose above the slopes. It is more than a scene of nature in mourning. It was a scene of death, but of an animated, living death a thousand times more horrible than that of a tomb.

But life had placed its imprint on this deathly scene, for the snow betrayed the presence or recent passage of carnivores. There were footprints and tracks of voles, weasels, martens, foxes of all kinds, and wolves. The latter, to judge by the spacing of their tracks and the wide footprints, must have been of considerable size.

The sight of so many tracks cheered the Eskimos, who saw them as indications of a highly successful spring hunt. After crossing over a frozen lake we rejoined the river, where once more we found a little island of thinly-scattered, sickly-looking spruce. These trees were not over three metres high. We made our mid-day stop among them.

At lunch I noticed with some surprise that my companions obstinately refused tea, ship's biscuits and even butter. The mangy Iyoumatounak did not want to use my ointment any more. What mysterious influence had come over their narrow minds so suddenly? Had their spirits given them directions, or had they had a frightening dream about me? Eskimos are wrapped up in so many superstitions.

Sida-Jen, whom I told what I'd noticed, replied, "It's because they are now almost on their own ground that they behave thus. You must not be surprised nor show offense. While they were in the 'neutral' country, devoted long since to barter between them and the Indians, they felt themselves free to live like Indians or whites. Now that they are in Eskimo country where no Loucheux or Hareskin Indian has ever set foot, they believe it would offend their god were they to conform to our usages. It's now up to us to imitate their ways."

It was a case of, when in Rome, do as the Romans.

Once under way again, we followed the foot of the red mountains which kept us company all the way to the coast. On the river we came across a fox trap made entirely from ice blocks. It made me admire the Eskimo genius once more. No difficulty thwarts these people. They overcome all obstacles.

The tracks of many foxes were noticeable on the ice in this, the "fur country" described by Jules Verne. Indeed we were travelling along the high ground which ends at Cape Bathurst, that famous granite headland which Verne's imagination transposed to the Pacific, I believe.

But let the reader be disabused. The Cape is still in its place and the diodorite which composes it will last as long as the rest of the world.

There are several kinds of foxes in the Eskimo lands, but they belong to two species only: the red or common and the Arctic fox, which between them show five or six colour phases. There is the Arctic or white fox (the "teriennak"), the most common, worth only two and a half francs. There is the silver fox or "keatsarolik," black with white-tipped fur. Another variety is the cross fox, black with a white streak down the back. The blue fox<sup>3</sup> is given the same name as the white one by the Eskimos. It is valued even less than the white. To my eyes this animal is lead grey with metallic glints. As to the superb "krenertork," or black fox, the rarest of all, with fur as black as crow feathers, the Eskimos get 15 francs for it and the Company used to sell it for as much as 1,000 francs to the mandarins of the celestial empire.

Since the Americans have found a way of dying furs which deceives the most expert eyes, beautiful black fox furs are produced from others and genuine "krenertork" skins have lost much of their former value.

The sun was setting and it was clearly time to set up camp. Yet Innonarana did not mention camp or the lamp. He was strangely sombre and pressed the pace. What could be agitating our noble chief?

For a fourth and last time we left the river and climbed the left bank and made for the interior. Another great bend of the Anderson obliged us to cut across more desolate hilly terrain. A ridge borders the ikaratsark channel, which I mentioned earlier, to the left and we now saw for the first time this chain of hills which told us of the approach of the sea.

Suddenly, after two hours' travelling, the ground at our feet disappeared and fell into a series of steep-sloped terraces down to the shore. There was the Anderson again, greatly widened and forming a vast and ultimate expansion before its opening into Liverpool Bay.

Along a stretch of 60 to 70 metres where the river banks are not cliffs any more but slopes of sedimentary material, I could see a dozen large igloos scattered like muskrat houses over the river ice. This was the most southern and eastern village of the Chiglit Eskimos. It belongs to the Kragmalivit [the eastern division of the Chiglit] of whom Noulloumallok Innonarana was the great man or chief.

As soon as our dogs became aware of the village they started to howl with joy and breaking away from the control of the drivers, rushed down the slopes, the sledges at their heels, to reach the nearest snow huts.

The whole place seemed to be dead and frozen at our approach. No cries of children playing in the snow, no young folk spinning their tops on the river ice, and not a puff of smoke above the dwellings. But at the noise of the dogs, some strange beings crept out of the snow houses on all fours and got onto their legs like bears rearing up. They raised their hands to the sky and repeatedly called out "Krayanapa! Krayanana!" The oldest of these singular beings, equipped with a tail and pointed ears of fur, struck her chest in inexplicable enthusiasm, calling out "Kratsia! krale! - a marvel! a marvel!" she repeated.

My readers will have guessed - before me were the females, the wives and daughters, of my hosts. Women dressed like bears in shaggy trousers and boots, heads surrounded by frightful huge hoods with aureoles of long reddish hairs. One would have thought it was a masquerade.

My grave mien and black dress caused these ladies to laugh and to utter exclamations of joy. Then they took on a serious, almost fierce air. I stepped toward them smiling and politely holding out my hand. This gesture they did not understand. They would not give me their hands but hid them behind their backs like so many shy children.

Meanwhile, Noulloumallok and his scabby companion, more surly and scowling more than ever, dusted the snow off their clothes for the last time and one after the other threw themselves into the hole leading into the house which had just vomitted up the women. These followed and General Bottom and I were left outside to cool off, with the dogs for company.

It seemed, if not a rude, at least a strange reception. First great outbursts of laughter, then an absolute refusal to shake hands, sullen looks and a total disappearance of both nymphs. However, there was an explanation. At the sight of his home, more like a large beaver lodge than the palace of a powerful chief, the great man of the Chiglit Kragmalivit felt that depression which overcomes a poor man about to entertain a rich one, that malaise of the humble in the face of the powerful. For in my poverty I was still rich and a potentate in the eyes of these disinherited children of the wild.

Thus Innonarana's face had darkened, had showed evident sadness which a forced smile could not disguise, as he said to me, "Here chief, is my house. It's small, very small for so many people."

It is along these lines that I later explained to myself the poor hospitality we had just received, but at the moment I could not

understand it. It differed so much from the frank gayety, the jovial eagerness and the almost childish enthusiasm with which I'd always been received by the Loucheux and Dene Indians. Sida-Jen, the poor General, clearly did not feel too happy either.

"The chief" he said, "is not satisfied, and yet I don't know why. Never mind, let's get inside. No harm will come to us under his roof."

So, getting down on his hands and knees, he entered the snow house after having safely disposed of my sled and its contents. I followed Sida-Jen in this four-footed progression.

#### CHAPTER IV. IN AN ESKIMO HOME

Description of an igloo. — Illamma. — Noulloumallok's rather inhospitable reception. — Amenity of the ladies. — A pleasant quid pro quo. — The comfort of Eskimo dwellings.

What singular and bizarre events were to take place within the next two weeks around a Frenchman who had come here from the shores of the Mediterranean. What remarkable subjects would there be for an ethnographer to observe. What material for reflection for a thinker would be presented.

I found myself suddenly transported to the most remote of all the peoples of the world, those who live nearest to the pole, the most paradoxical people, utter strangers to our beliefs, customs and habits.

Undeniably I was among the poorest, the most despised and the most ill-favoured of men, yet I learnt much from meeting them which caused me to change my preconceived opinions. I had read everything about them that has been related by Arctic explorers who had preceded me. These were scholars, men of genius, whose discoveries enriched geography and ethnology. Since childhood I had been familiar with the Eskimos through reading. I thought I knew their customs and aptitudes, their appearance and mode of life, and yet now I realized I knew nothing about them. The mere sight of a few of them, some hours passed in their company, a day spent under one of their roofs, taught me more than I had read before and was yet to read.

Oh it's very true in all things that experience surpasses knowledge, particularly in connection with primitive peoples. Published accounts about them are often erroneous, based on speculation or founded on mere imagination. Experience explains facts, corrects flights of the imagination and does not admit theorizing.

These were the thoughts that passed through my mind as I crawled through the low and narrow passage into Noulloumallok's hut while trying to guard my hands and knees from the filth which had accumulated in this primitive antechamber. The chief's igloo was built up against a bank on one side and was protected on the other by the entrance passage. It was somewhat reminiscent of certain megalithic monuments, only here squared off blocks of ice took the place of stones.

The passage opened towards the sea and was semicircular; its convexity was towards the direction of the most violent winds, those from the east.

But for the large, perfectly translucent block of ice set in the dome of the igloo, which lit it up like an open skylight, the hut

from the outside would have looked much like a haystack buried in the snow. This skylight of ice is the only route by which light can pass into these Arctic yourts. Through it light enters, as it were joyously and abundantly, leaving, with the possible exception of the recesses into which the interior is divided, no unlit nooks and crannies.

Early in spring, the season in which we were now, the Eskimos habitually demolish the upper part of the kranitat or passage and replace it by a conical tent. This enables them to light a fire at the door of the house where they can cook and where they can keep their dogs in the warmth.

There was therefore a tent or "itsark" above Innonarana's kranitat.

I saw a boy entirely dressed in seal skins in this tent who, equipped with a wooden ladle, was supervising something he was boiling in an iron kettle of Russian origin. Had I been a better physiognomist, I would have recognized his apparently new face as one I'd previously taken as that of the daughter of one of my hosts. He seemed to be a lad of fourteen to fifteen, flat-faced and sallow, with inert-looking eyes and an expression suggesting a lack of ideas and of imagination. A small, almost square hood closely framed his face.

He looked rather like puss in boots to me. He even had appropriate ears on his hood. Only the tail was lacking and, as he was wearing his skins with the hairy side inwards, one could have mistaken him for a scorched cat.

At my humble entrance into his tent, the young cook stood up, smiled agreeably and, sticking his tongue out at me, gave me a Tibetan style greeting to which I responded in the same way. He made other mincing gestures which I failed to understand and then pointed out the continuation of the passage to me and resumed his surveillance of the steaming cauldron.

At the end of the passage my nose came up against a wall. Raising my head, I noticed a greasy white skin above me, which I raised with the top of my head, and so the upper part of my person emerged into the full light of the interior of the igloo through a trap door set at a slant which served as the entrance. The light inside the house, after the murky subterranean passage, made me feel as if I'd stepped into a pigeon loft.

But what smells, great God. I had already felt upset in the passage. Now I'd have to stay, I knew not how long, in another sewer where I had to breathe in the most fetid miasmas. What to do? I was in the presence of my hosts. The chief, wrapped in a caribou skin robe, was already on one side of the sleeping platform, while



Iyoumatounak was stretched out on his back on the other side. Their two wives, naked to the waist, sat between them inviting me with the most gracious smiles to their conjugal sanctuary. I must not hesitate. I suppressed my disgust and controlled my stomach, which seemed about to rise, and, assuming an expression of enthusiastic admiration, I struck my thigh while calling out "Kratsia, krale" as I'd seen these ladies do upon our arrival. "Plaude super femur tuum potentissime," as the prophet said, and so I praised what I beheld in the judaic manner on my powerful thigh. I've never been so hypocritical in my life, but the requirements of good manners are rigid. I was more than polite here. I acted like a courtesan. The roles had been changed.

In spite of the plumpness which would have qualified these ladies for the taste of a Sultan, both were called "Aoularena," meaning Little Needle. They moved apart to give me room between themselves while they stuck out their tongues at me in greeting. I must admit that the manners of these ladies showed none of the grossness of Indian women. One might have thought them to be Chinese or Japanese ladies. With the utmost gravity I also showed them my tongue while making them a most courtly bow.

But at once two frightful cries rang out and they pushed me back laughing. Good God. I'd scattered snow on their satin skins for I'd forgotten to beat it out of my clothing before coming in, in spite of the many examples I'd had from my hosts.

No doubt I'd committed an unpardonable offense, a veritable act of savagery. "Oh those Krablounet who think themselves so polite, how gross they are" these good people must have murmured or thought to themselves.

The two women charitably picked up a piece of fur and themselves rubbed me down. Then they made me sit down between them with gusts of laughter like two children.

Primitive people are very jovial. There are no gayer companions than they when they are with someone they like and who they feel likes them too. The two husbands meanwhile were pouting, with good cause. They were jealous of the attention given to me, but they remained quiet and polite. Was I not their guest?

As to Sida-Jen, the women also encouraged him to come in and sit down, but with little ceremony. The poor devil was far from being at ease. I could see clearly that only my assurance gave him courage. His oblique eyes were on everything, but he did not say a word. He did not feel at home, poor lad, and he knew he was not liked. So he shut himself into that stoicism which novelists have ascribed to redskins which is, however, only their expression of distrust or indifference towards strangers they despise, or whose intentions they doubt.

The more the two "Little Needles" showed themselves amiable, the more withdrawn and sullen their husbands became.

"My house is small for so many people," said the chief while looking about with an expression of boredom. "Could not the white chief go and lodge elsewhere?"

"Where would you have me go, great man?" I said to him with an astonished expression. "Have you not been charged with me and my servant here? Did not Mitchi Paloum (Mr. MacFarlane) give you five fine wolverine skins to pay you for your hospitality toward me and for the bit of food we will eat in your house?"

Mr. MacFarlane, out of delicacy, had not told me of this gift, but Alphonse, who'd witnessed it being made, had told me about it. Surprised at my knowledge of the matter, Innonarana, the bandit, placed in the position of having to show himself an honest man in the eyes of his own people and myself, produced a forced smile while showing evident embarrassment.

He passed his fingers through the scanty stiff hairs of his Tartar beard to give himself countenance. Then in soft tones he said to me, "Katoun, my house is very small, that's true. It's a very small house - iglouaralouk, it has only one sleeping platform, but this is your home. Take off your clothes, make yourself comfortable and show us that your heart is as white as your words are good."

But I did not show him my white heart. It was not warm enough for that in the iglouaralouk, but I doffed my coat, hat and mittens, keeping my black jacket and trousers.

On seeing these sombre garments, the two ladies made a sudden movement of fear. They squeezed up against their husbands and wrinkled their noses like angry cats while looking at one another - a sign of distrust.

"God, what intentions can a man dressed in black have?" That is what I read in their faces. One would have thought they were seeing some fearful apparition.

I began to see the light. The women at first had mistaken me for the commander of Fort Anderson, whom I resembled somewhat, and this accounted for the gracious reception they had accorded me.

And now that they looked at my face more closely, my funereal garb told them I was an unknown stranger, a preacher. They withdrew from me with terror, or at least timidity, seeking refuge with their natural protectors.

"Who is he then?" they murmured.

"Mitchi Pitchitork, Tchikreynarm iyaye. Mr. Petitot, the son of the sun."

Once more they stuck out their tongues at me and opened their eyes wide at me, the better to take my measure.

"Mitchi Pitchitork," they repeated, "the son of the sun."

"Oh yes," answered the chief, glorying at being able to impress his better half. Now it was the turn of the husbands to make fun at the mistake their wives had made.

I wanted to dispel the erroneous impression that the discovery of my solar origin was producing on these poor sweet little ladies.

I opened the bag which held all my luggage and pulled out some sewing needles. These are highly prized objects among Eskimo women, to whom they are of great value for their husbands cannot make equivalent ones out of bone.

I gave each of the ladies a round needle and a large square-bodied one for sewing skins. Exclamations of pleasure passed their lips. At the same time Madame Aoularena No 1, called the scorched cat who was still cooking out in the dark passage by shouting, "Illamma, come and see. Needles!"

At this the boy hurried into the hut offering me his hands. Then, noticing my black dress with its white collar, the most lugubrious costume human imagination has been able to invent, his face became immobile and his hand dropped back to his side.

He was hardly able to place a wooden bowl loaded with chunks of meat and boiled caribou tongues on the sleeping platform.

"Illamma," his mother said again, holding out her little treasure to him, "look here."

The child, somewhat reassured, once more raised his hands to me. I started to laugh at his initial fright and his present begging gesture.

"Does one give needles to boys as well?" I asked General Bottom in Hare Indian.

"What's the chief saying?" asked Innonarana.

Sida-Jen repeated my question to him in Eskimo. Then they all started to laugh loudly. Even Illamma took part and caused me to laugh as well, though I knew not why. Alphonse explained.

"That's no boy," he said. "It's one of the chief's daughters. Were you not a stranger, you would have noticed her on our arrival."

It was now my turn to laugh at my mistake, and with good cause. This error of mine completely broke the ice which had somehow formed between Noulloumallok and me. The great man laughed so much he had to support his belly. Illamma gladly accepted her share of needles, dinner was served and we all partook in good spirits. In the absence of other topics, the story of my mistaking the girl for a boy came up for discussion again and again during the evening, always greeted hilariously by these simple naive people.

You can be sure they are laughing about it yet, for it takes so little to break the extreme monotony of the lives of these hyper-boreans.

Only now did I understand the sticking out of the tongue and the mincing gestures Illamma had made at my entry into the kranitat. She too mistook me for the factor of Fort Anderson. So much can a day's exposure to a temperature of 45° below zero blur one's features.

What I did not know at the time was that Noulloumallok was another Cosme de Medicis.<sup>4</sup> Only in 1870 did the Eskimos, immoral as they are but shocked at the depravity of their chief, tell me that in the circumstances my life would have been in great danger had I not mistaken Illamma for Noulloumallok's son instead of his daughter. For this error of mine assured her incestuous father that I knew nothing of his conduct and also saved the face of that touchy man.

But General Bottom, suspicious of the jealous distrust shown by Innonarana and unable to explain it to himself also had no idea of its underlying motive or of the peril to which it exposed us.

The houses of the Chiglit are crudely constructed somewhat like cages. Four tree trunks, their roots up in the air, unless they happen to be forked, are forced into the ground. They hold four cross beams arranged in a square which in turn supports a ceiling of cudgels lined up side by side. Thus a sort of huge table is formed, its center occupied by the ice block skylight. Poles passing at a slant from the ground up to the edge of this table form the walls of the building. The poles are fastened at the top and consolidated with some large pieces of wood below. Mosses, lichens, clay, snow and slush are used to fill up the gaps in these primitive walls and with the last two materials an airtight sealing off of the structure is secured. Cold can form the best cement and it can serve as a skillful mason. It provides useful raw material and can also finish it off suitably. Don't laugh, reader, that is the exact truth. We should learn to understand the works of God where nature will not permit those of man. Our judgement is only too often based too much on concrete example while at other times we generalize too much. We see the brick and slate houses we occupy and from our little corner we form opinions about all the rest of the world. This is both unjust and irrational.

As for myself, I prefer the comfortable simplicity of Eskimo homes more and more to the superb buildings of European capitals which here in the north would be useless ice houses.

Each side of Noulloumallok's house thus formed an alcove furnished with a platform where one or two couples or families could settle down. Only the alcove in which the lamp stood was different. It sloped downwards and in its floor was the trap door covered with a piece of skin which served as the entrance. Seen from outside, covered as it was with earth and snow, the building looked like a natural hillock.

The construction shows that the poor Eskimos are better physicists than many civilized people. They know that warm air is less dense than cold air and so rises above the latter. Therefore the floors of their houses are raised above ground level and the passages leading into them run at a lower level than the house proper. Thus warm air is trapped within the buildings. It's not very hygienic, true, but the cold compensates sufficiently so that one's lungs don't suffer too much from the reduced air circulation.

These houses have no fireplaces. There are only the stone oil lamps which are in the sole charge of married women. According to ancient usage, each woman has her own lamp, each one placed by one of the four posts that hold up the house, where it stands on some piles driven into the ground. The floor of the house is formed by large sticks lined up one to another. Each lamp has a wooden grill over it, the "panertsivik," on which cooking utensils and pieces of meat which are to be thawed out are placed, as well as clothes which need drying or which are to be heated.

As the days lengthened during my stay the lamp was only lit at night. In a few more days the people would gladly extinguish it altogether and put it away with their other treasures for they could then light fires out of doors.

But in the long winter nights when the day was reduced to two hours of twilight and mists are frequent, when the frost gradually overtakes the sea and the rivers, these granite luminaries become an absolute necessity and are of great value.

How happy these heathens would be if one day we could provide them with oil lamps. And yet they might lose by the change, at least the ladies. No more could they lick their little cooking sticks or swallow their lamp wicks. This must be a luxury I can readily appreciate.

Compared to the other dwellings of savages I had seen - pointed lodges, conical tents, rounded yourts, wattle huts with clay, simple log houses, open air camps or households with two fires, it seemed to me that the Eskimo houses provided all the ease and comfort obtainable at a latitude of 69° north.

The temperature inside them varied from 5° to 18°C, quite enough to prevent one feeling cold. Neither water nor oil freezes in these dwellings and that is certainly more than one can say of Canadian houses which, once the stove is out, become truly glacial. Thus the Eskimo, accustomed to being nude in his igloo, feels cold when he visits a European house and freezes among the Indians.

More, these Eskimo houses breathe a certain comfortable air which suits sedentary people but which nomads cannot allow themselves. They have a storehouse, for the kranitat serves as a larder, and in the house proper one finds all sorts of objects never seen in the tents of the Indians - pots and jars for water and oil, heaps of dry white lichen, beds to sleep on which also serve as dining chairs, little curios such as figures carved in ivory, little boxes decorated with bones carefully etched with designs or with holes in decorative patterns, little bags of fish skin or fur, collars made from bear or eagle claws, fishhooks made out of red, white or green soapstone or from ivory carved into the shape of a fish with inset blue or red glass eyes and sculpted fins.

Hanging on the walls were bows and quivers with the points of the arrows projecting, not as painters depict them, with the barbed ends of the shafts uppermost. There were unfinished gala clothes, ornamented with beads, made by the women of the house, headbands, pipes made out of metal and stuffed eagles and other birds. In short, there was a veritable museum of ethnological curiosities of great interest that might have put a collector into a fever.

## CHAPTER V. MY AMIABLE HOSTS

Analogies between the Inuit and the Chinese. — The two Little Needles. — Revolting nudity. — False hair. — The nose-rubbing greeting. — First night in Noulloumallok's home. — The estuary of the Anderson. — The chief's inept pleasantries.

There is much that is reminiscent of the Chinese in the Eskimos. The luxury of sorts and the sense of well-being in their homes, the attention they pay to their personal comfort, are examples of this to my mind. There are other similarities between the two peoples - the form and manner of using pipes for smoking, the shape of their boots which they use secondarily as pockets and which are decorated in a style which seems to have been borrowed from the celestial empire, and lastly in their sleeping platforms.

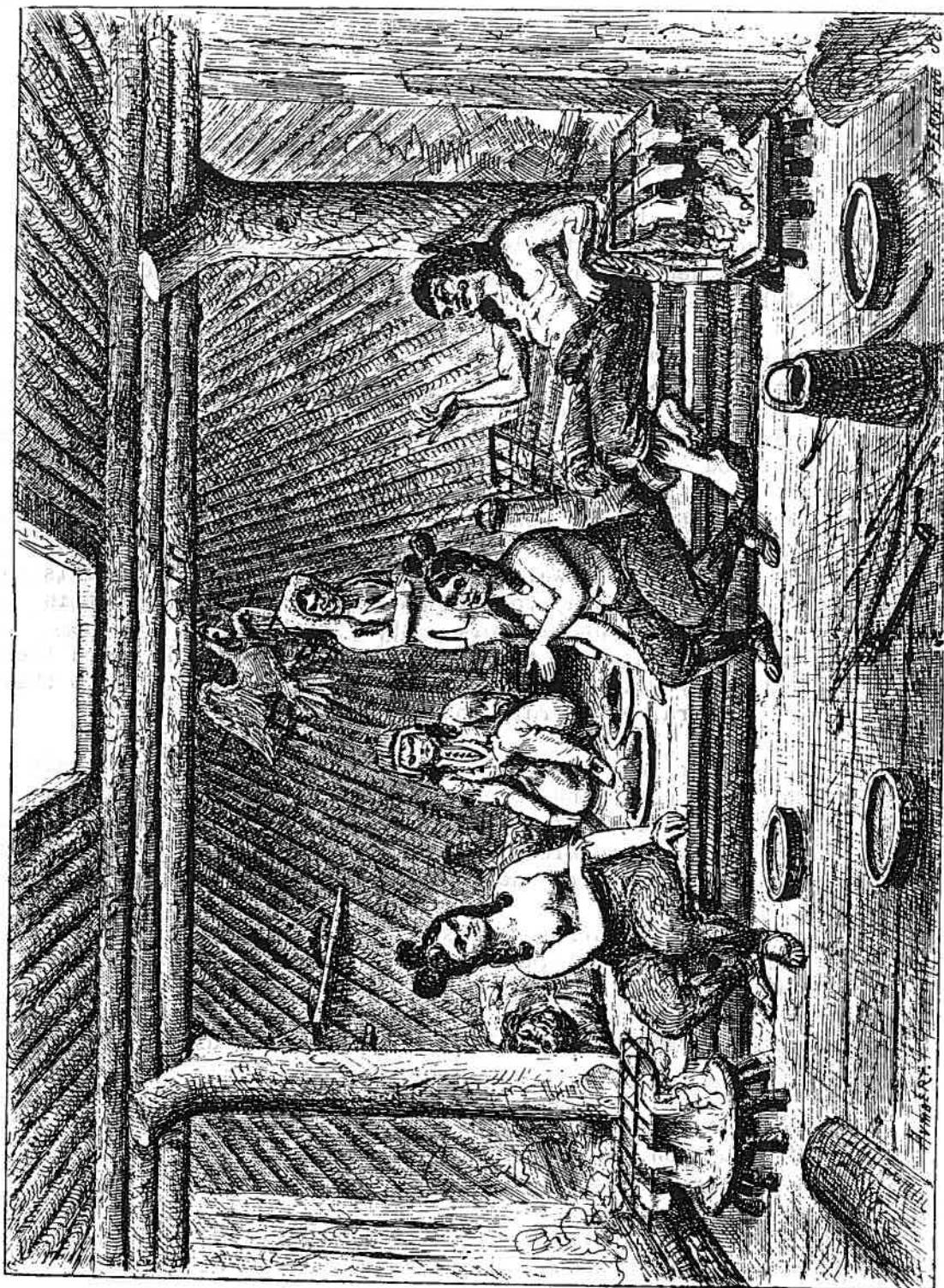
As regards anthropological and psychological characters, note the Eskimo's yellowish-greenish skin, his wide round face, his oblique little eyes, his exquisite politeness, his inventive and imitative genius, his aptitude for the arts and commerce; note above all his insolence, fearlessness, his total lack of shame and honesty.

The originality of the Eskimo distinguishes him from the Indian in many things. When Eskimos sleep they place their feet against the wall and their heads towards the middle of the room. This is to enable them, when surprised, to face an enemy. They never sit in the middle of the sleeping platform - that is the place for the children and for strangers - they will sit at either end. When they receive guests they will place them head to foot in relation to their wives. This is moral but hardly polite.

Meanwhile, our meal had come to an end. My hosts wiped their hands, greasy from gravy and bone marrow, on their faces, on their bare chests or in their hair. Then they took a handful of very fine chips such as the men are always whittling, and properly wiped their hands, mouths and faces with these.

As to washing with urine, a custom the Eskimos share with the Hottentots and South Australian aborigines, this is reserved for certain civil and religious ceremonies. Uric acid, it must be said, is a strong alkali [sic] capable of loosening fats by combining with them, but the substance I have chiefly seen Eskimos use in place of soap is raw fish.

The two Little Needles remained seated and began to study me with marked attention and a meretricious impudence. Their persistence embarrassed me. I knew that all Arctic explorers agree about the unbridled license of the fair sex among the Eskimos. It is perhaps worse among them than it was in pagan antiquity, but I noticed that with the Eskimo women their naivety and lack of coquetry and the approbation, or at least indifference, of the



Interior of Noulloumallok's igloo  
from a sketch by Petitot



husbands contributes immensely to give their women the allure of courtesans.

Madame Little Needle No. 1 had bleary eyes and her Tartar face was not very prepossessing, but her companion, the other Little Needle, was not over twenty and was a fine plump girl with good, almost distinguished, features. She had large black eyes like an odalisque though, like the latter, they also gave an impression of thoughtlessness, and a proudly up-turned nose and upper lip. In short, she had the wanton and victorious air which lends so much charm to a Parisian grisette. She had a small regular mouth, and a majestic bosom. The fine hands and feet of a duchess completed this laughing and slightly disdainful beauty.

Perhaps someone feels that there must have been some European blood in this lady. It's possible. All my philosophy could have wished for in addition in this young person, was that she might have been dressed less revealingly. But we must not be in a hurry to condemn in other peoples appearances our prudery may mistakenly regard as offensive.

The main reasons why primitives, particularly the Eskimos, discard all clothing indoors, are their lack of underclothing, of combs, of Neopolitan ointment, of insecticide powders--in short, of all that would prevent them from being invaded night and day by vermin which shelter in their fur clothing. What should they do to prevent themselves being devoured by lice in the hot houses which are their homes?

Naturally they shed their furs and hurry to put them out in the cold, which purifies them and keeps them clean.

Further, they want to show to their guests and neighbours that "their hearts are white," that they carry no hidden arms and harbour no feelings of hatred. By displaying themselves unclothed to others, they inspire the latter with confidence. Is this not a form of charity?

It is a fact that the first time I undressed, in the limited European style, among the Eskimos in order to go to sleep, they were so grateful for this show of confidence on my part that they thanked me with tears in their eyes.

If after this there are still people so narrow-minded as to condemn the costumes and classical poses of a people deprived of so many enjoyments, all of the pleasures of civilized man, I will send him to our public monuments where we submit to the contemplation of our wives and girls equally beautiful but equally unclad bodies, to the art salons where we annually admire and crown pictures of the same with laurels and then reproduce by the thousands the indecencies which are authorized because they are reputed to be "artistic." What

of our theatres where that great rage (I was going to say the horror) of our epoch, unknown as such to pagan antiquity, woman naked, is displayed with but the scant disguise of tights. If we do not then admit ourselves to be guiltier than the Eskimos, we can only proclaim that the human body is the most noble and artistic creation to have emerged from the hands of God, which is true, and that we are stupid to blush at what constitutes our glory; that the Eskimos show better taste, high-mindedness and simplicity than civilized man and that we are, after all, a lot of Tartufes lacking the courage of our opinions and incapable of supporting them by our acts.

I am far from maintaining that the Eskimos are better than we are. Far from it. I will merely add that after considering their indecency from a certain point of view, there is nothing like their nudity to extinguish concupiscence and to arouse disgust in a sensitive person.

Inveterate habit from the cradle makes exposure blameless in the eyes of the Inuit and so excusable, particularly as they are scandalized by Europeans taking unbecoming liberties and taking indiscreet looks.

The costume of the Eskimo women is almost the same as that of the men. Their caribou skin coat, the kapitouark, is slit at the sides below the waist and is somewhat longer than that of the men. In cut and ornamentation it resembles a deacon's dalmatic.

This brings me to remark that ethnography should pay somewhat more attention to costume. Costumes should be investigated, collected, or at least reproduced pictorially, to make comparisons between present day and ancient peoples possible. Conjectures based on analogy would then be possible.

I've already said that the Eskimos wear gallic breeches - that is to say short trousers which come only a little below the knee. The skin trousers of Eskimo women are tight-fitting and are joined to the boots.

But what is neither pretty nor elegant about the dress of Chiglit women is the huge hood somewhat like a scarecrow's hat, which is necessitated by the voluminous chignon which surrounds the crown of the head of these ladies.

These women pull up their hair in a topknot like the Chinese. The Greenland Eskimos follow the same style but what the Greenland Eskimo women do not do, is to attach to the knot or chignon all the hair of their husbands or lovers that they can get hold of. The Chiglit women arrange the added hair in a large ball attached to each side of their topknot. Other strands of "borrowed hair" hang down over the breast in the shape of enormous curls like the hair clubs of the ancient Egyptians, and this gives them, quite falsely, a somewhat sphynx-like air.

Such is what the Eskimos consider a praiseworthy custom. This is what civilized women who wear false hair unknowingly imitate. In using the curls from the heads of their husbands, Eskimo women need not blush - what is the husband's also belongs to the wife.

I approve less of the Eskimo embrace - that of rubbing one's nose against that of a person one wishes to honour or toward whom one wants to express love. It is bestial. This custom has also been found in Greenland, throughout Polynesia, among the Malays, and among many of the peoples of the Americas. The Dene and the Loucheux Indians know it too. The British captain, J.H. Lewin, found it among several of the peoples of India who; according to him, in circumstances where we say "put your arms around me," say, more delicately, "smell me."

I don't share the captain's sentiment. I hold the firm opinion that a kiss is much better than one of these nose-rubs, above all if it involves the coral lips of pretty women, particularly when one considers that Eskimos are not exactly perfumed according to our tastes.

Eskimo men have very low-pitched voices, but the women are rather squeaky, weak-voiced. I conceive that the excessive use of seal oil and whale oil might affect the vocal cords of the Eskimos just as it may underly their lymphatic temperament.

The frequent eye affections of the Eskimos are perhaps also due to their great consumption of oils, for the excessive use of sesame and of arachis oil has been suggested as the cause of such conditions among Egyptian Jews.

Night had long since come and though I'd only spent three or four hours in the igloo, it seemed as if a week must have passed for I had noticed and observed so many strange things.

Now sleepiness was overcoming me. I said my night prayer and crawled into the fur sleeping bag, which served me altogether for sixteen years on and beyond the Arctic Circle.

My hosts seemed only to have been awaiting my signal in order to get ready for bed themselves. The two men leaned forward and began a low-pitched slow mumbling - a sort of whining song, which lasted no more than three minutes.

Was it a hymn directed to some protective spirit of the home or an exorcism against some evil design they might suppose me to have? I don't know. In any case, I admit that I felt a sort of respect for their apparent act of faith. A man who believes and prays is worthy of esteem.

The women did not pray, for prayers and songs are the property of shamans or medicine men who are believed to be powerful enough

to "pull the heavens down to earth." As the ancients believed, "Carmina vel coelo possunt deducere lunam."

Perhaps the song of the men had no other purpose but to obtain the gift of pleasant dreams from the Tornrark, for dreams play a great role in the power and occult science of North American shamans. Why not? Does not the Talmud, a product of educated and civilized peoples, state that dreams are the sixth part of prophecy? How satisfactory to know oneself on this basis to be somewhat of a prophet, even if only a sixth part of one.

When the chant was over, my hosts disappeared, among crackling electrical sparks, under their furs.

I slept badly - the platform meant for five people was a tight squeeze for seven of us. The smells and the heat also woke me up several times.

In the reddish light of the stone lamp I saw all my companions busy at one time or another scratching themselves vigorously for they were being devoured by vermin.

Particularly Illamma, the fifteen year old girl who had already scratched her neck and ears until the blood came, began to cry and lament. Her mother drew her towards herself to perform that eminent service for her which, according to Darwin, man has learnt from monkeys. Madame Aoularena No 1's little cries of amazement showed that the harvest was abundant and that Illamma had not been deloused for some time.

But stop my pen. I perceive that you are leading me into a delicate domain where French eyes and a French heart hesitate to follow. Let us therefore draw a veil over further description of this grooming of mother and daughter.

Ten times did my hosts interrupt their sleep that night in order to sit up, to chat, have a drink, or to smoke. This must be what the Dene Indians refer to in their legends of man-dogs "who know not sleep." Livingstone relates the same about the Negroes of the African great lake region. Peace and sleep are the lot only of the virtuous, not of those whose memories are burdened with crimes, vicious appetites and nocturnal terrors.

"Kratetsey, tsitle; chief, man, how can you sleep? Wake up," they said to me.

"What for?" I said, yawning and turning over again with a frown.

"How come? Don't you want to eat? Aren't you thirsty?" one of them asked.

"Neither," said I, "I'm sleepy, that's all. Let me sleep."

"Kratetsey," said another, "pass me my pipe. You are lying on it and don't you want a little smoke?"

"In heaven's name, let me sleep," I replied. "Night is made for sleeping."

At this they all burst out laughing.

"Isn't he quaint?"

"How strongly he sleeps."

"What a sleeper you are tsitle."

Forgive me. All these details may be prosaic and banal and even unbecoming. But I felt these scenes of domestic life help one to understand a people. Eskimo customs are such that I neither disapprove nor approve of them, but they are naive and amusing and for these reasons I expose them to the public.

When I awoke in the morning, light was streaming in through the ice block skylight. The room looked quite gay to me and my hosts, who had already been up for a while, were once more eating blubber and drinking seal oil.

How many such meals does an Eskimo take in twenty-four hours? God knows! These people are comparable to animals which eat, digest while resting, eat again in order to digest once more and take a rest while waiting to become hungry again. Their stomachs seem to be incapable of fatigue nor to suffer from overloading. They must work like a bird's gizzard and have the ardour of a well-ventilated furnace. Like ostriches, I think Eskimos could digest pebbles.

I was eager to get out of doors for some fresh air while General Bottom prepared breakfast for the two of us. A great silence and a sense of solitude hung over the Chiglit hamlet. Not a voice nor indeed any sound was to be heard. No smoke hung over the domes of houses. The air was very cold, dry and biting. The temperature must have been about 50°C below zero, but the atmosphere was beautifully clear - the sky deep blue and the hills were gilded by the sun's rays. The last wide expanse of the frozen river with the toothed silhouettes of the crests of the hills rising beyond gave this peaceful Arctic landscape a great charm in spite of its desolation and air of sterility.

Quickly I made a sketch and then made haste to return indoors for the cold had painfully seized my fingers with a feeling like the touch of a red hot iron. In the kranitat the dogs came to me to be petted. They were resigned, for one paw had been slipped through the collar to prevent them from straying. Like most other objects,

the dogs were covered with hoar frost. After a warm spring day the lairs in which the animals spend their non-working time soon become sewers where one's hands and feet encounter a blackish mush which smells of seal oil, blubber and dog urine.

As I entered the igloo, the others were speaking about me with admiration and continued to do so in my presence.

"Do you have a wife?" Innonarana suddenly asked. This indiscreet question displeased me and I answered it through the intermediary of Sida-Jen.

"Tell the chief," I told him, "that the Krablounet can do quite well without women. As to myself, I've never had one."

I cannot describe the air of astonishment and admiration this reply produced on the faces of my hosts. The ability to abstain from that which to them is a natural necessity like eating, drinking and sleeping, was so incomprehensible to them that they looked at one another in speechless astonishment.

"Kratsia!" the chief said several times, speaking to himself. "Kratsia! aouyoarmik nalouiyork! Kouyayouiktouark, arkrare. Would you believe it! He has never known a woman - he doesn't know evil. What a marvel!"

For some moments he sat lost in thought, seeking a solution to this incomprehensible phenomenon.

Who knows, perhaps he thought I was androgynous or cryptogamous like the black beaver - the supposed ancestor of the Eskimos.

Suddenly he seemed to have found the solution he was looking for. With an outburst of laughter Noulloumallok cried out what sounded to me like Pilate.

At this there was a general outburst of laughter from all the rest. Even Sida-Jen, ordinarily so serious, could not help laughing too.

Had I known the meaning of this Eskimo word, I would have corrected the impertinence it conveyed with grave dignity. As it was, my ignorance of the languages saved my dignity but my calm air only caused the others to break out into further gales of childish laughter.

"Look here, Alphonse," I said to General Bottom, "aren't you going to tell me what this wag meant by calling me Pilate?"

"He didn't say Pilate," the Loucheux replied naively, "he said Pilakto," and he began to laugh once more.

"All right," I said, "Pilakto, Pilate - it doesn't matter. What does it mean?"

"Hmmm, I don't know anything about it. It's a word in their language." But while telling me this he burst out laughing again, only to be echoed by the others.

I began to feel impatient and irritated. Primitive people are very eager to make someone the butt of a joke, particularly when they can exercise their hilarity at the expense of a stranger.

"You know nothing about nothing, you rascal," I said to my Indian. "If you do know, will you please explain."

"I don't know, I don't know anything about it. Ask the chief who brought up the word. I didn't say it, I didn't think it."

I saw I would not gain anything by pressing him further, so I did what I always do in such circumstances. I retired into my injured dignity, picked up one of my books and, turning my back on the company, began to read with an air of indifference.

This was enough to reduce the rest to silence.

I only discovered the meaning of Pilakto much later. They'd taken me for - I hesitate to say - an eunuch.

As I was reading, admiring whispers began to be heard. I saw first one nose, then two, three, four noses peeping over my shoulders and shedding their shadows over my book and soon all five of their owners were looking to and fro my lips, my eyes and the book. I'd presented them with yet another mystery. What the devil could I be doing looking at the little black marks in my book?

"Tchouva tchouva?" said the chief. "What is it?"

"Krayeouyark, a book," answered Sida-Jen.

"Ah, tchouna tchouna tchenaviak; and what does a book do?"

"It talks to him."

"So, and what is he saying to it?"

"Well, I don't know. I know no more about it than you do."

"What fellow, you've lived with the whites and you don't know what they say to books?" muttered the chief.

"It's true. I don't know."

A derisory smile passed over Noulloumallok's lips.

As the group had once more become serious, I told them of the customs and morals of my country, of the chastity and loyalty of our married women, of the sweetness and goodness of our husbands toward them, of the purity of our young girls, of the rarity of infanticide, the love of mothers for their many children, how theft, homicide and adultery were punished. In short, I told them all that was respectable and virtuous in a Christian and civilized society. I made sure not to mention the vicious deeds and crimes which are committed there too.

Alphonse, who translated for me, confirmed what I'd said by telling the Eskimos that his parents had already just about reached the perfection which I was describing and that they thought it the ideal life.

And now our roles changed. My hosts became first serious, then sad. The two men lowered their heads as if they'd been publicly shamed. The women made significant grimaces and fixed questioning eyes on their husbands. But the latter did not respond.

It was the *durus hic sermo* of the gospel. Noulloumallok aroused the women from their sober and fearful mood by bringing up again the word Pilakto and so another last outburst of laughter formed their response to my diatribe.

I had been preaching in an empty desert.



## CHAPTER VI. HOW I GOT MY OWN BACK

The sorceries of the Son of Sun. — An Eskimo menu. — An improvised concert. — The chief's Pandora's box. — An Eskimo tradition. — Method of calculating household chores. — The Tiktalerk or Inconnu fish.

My watch, my compass and my matches interested the Eskimos much more than the sermon on Christian morality and conjugal fidelity I'd just delivered.

The ticking of my watch attracted more attention than our transcendental views. I asked them to make up an Eskimo name for the watch, which they looked on as great magic and as something made by God, like ourselves. The chief suggested Kraviartoan, a little thing that turns.

"No" I said "that's not quite it. It has a mechanism which is somewhat like the human heart - it beats evenly like a heart. It also resembles the sun which is the heart and regulator of nature. Can you express both these ideas?"

"Tchikreyneralouk - a little sun" said a woman.

"That's not quite it either" I said, "a watch doesn't illuminate, it regulates."

"Well then, innouaralouk - little man" the chief suggested.

I was not satisfied with this either. I wanted a word to express the measuring of time but the idea of the latter was too abstract for them. The chief became obstinate and bad-tempered about further mental work on the matter. I had to choose between a turning thing, a little sun or a little man.

Having let them touch and listen to my watch, I exposed my compass to their astonished eyes, saying that this was really a turning thing which always turned to one direction.

They didn't believe a word of this. They thought the little trembling needle obeyed my will, that I was lying in order not to be taken for a magician, a figure who is never looked on with favour (for he might be dangerous) among primitive peoples.

For these simple people an educated person is a sorcerer. Are not many of our peasants like that too?

That is what one often gains by telling the truth and nothing but the truth to those who cannot accept it. The weak-minded would often prefer to be deceived or to deceive themselves rather than see the light and be compelled to act accordingly.

Never mind. I don't regret what I told these people. When knowledge comes to them later they will not despise my memory and claim that I abused their ignorance to aggrandize myself in their eyes.

Neither could I convince them as to the real nature of my matches, but I could in this connection pay them back for the sport they'd had with me as a supposed pilakto. When they saw me strike a match against my clothing they wanted to put it out in order to light it again themselves. Of course they couldn't do this after any number of attempts and decided I must be a most powerful Anregok [medicine man].

These entertainments passed the morning and then Illamma served dinner. The menu was as follows: first course; raw caribou meat, lightly unfrozen over the lamp and thus made more tasty by its oily smoke, half unfrozen muktuk, the pink blubber from just beneath the white whale's skin. Second course; white whale flippers and filtered seal oil. Dessert; raw caribou bone marrow. Drink; water, in my case tea. Ice as desired.

Dinner over, the two Eskimos went out to check their nearby traps and left me with the three women. After their jealousy the evening before they must have formed a high opinion of me thus to leave me in charge of their home. I'd made some progress in their esteem and confidence.

Sida-Jen asked permission to go to visit some of the other homes, which I granted.

The women had little blue crosses tattooed on their cheeks and a series of parallel lines from the mouth down to the chin. The replicas of ancient Egyptians displayed in the Jardins des Plantes in Paris show a similar ornamentation.

On their bodies I notice little scars which were either the marks of old caresses made by the knives of their husbands, lovecuts as it were, or those of skin eruptions.

To entertain me, the ladies performed a song accompanied by expressive gestures. As the only words were "eh! yan yan, eh!" it was not difficult to learn and accompany them at a lower pitch.

They were full of admiration of my singing.

Having noted down two or three of their airs, I showed good will by translating a French hymn, using the dictionary I'd worked on since I'd been with them. I took the gentle sweet song of Lautrec, "Dernier des Abencérages" - what a sweet memory - and sang it to them.

They clapped their hands for joy and had I permitted it, would have embraced me.

When their husbands returned we had a grand concert in the igloo, the women were more enthusiastic but soon the two men were affected too, for they joined first in the chorus to my hymn and then in the verse as soon as they'd learned it. Having thought I'd composed it, they said, "How did he make it up so soon?" For this seemed quite a feat to them.

And I can say in all modesty that my words were on a somewhat higher plane than those of an Anglican missionary who later, on a similar occasion, composed the following lines off the cuff:

"Kreylark iglou  
Kouyok tchouitor  
Touktouk anheyok  
Krayanapa."

This means in literal translation:

"The heavenly home Paradise  
is not bad,  
plenty of caribou meat,  
blessed place."

He was not lacking in spirit, this minister.

Once the concert was over, Noulloumallok slipped his hand inside his coat which he had not yet shed and pulled out a fine black fox worth 15 francs. This unexpected exhibit was greeted by prolonged exultation. Then they all looked at me and called out, "Matchi, matchi! Thanks, thanks!"

They were convinced that my occult powers had guided the fox to the trap. I am certain, dear reader, that many a saint in the calendar performed miracles no better than those my innocent hosts attributed to me.

For a moment I thought the chief, confounded by this marvel, would cry out like the Centurion of old. "Leave me oh Lord, for I am not worthy that you should live in my house."

I'm sure my reputation as a magician has grown with time and has assumed considerable proportions, that my Anderson River friends speak with enthusiasm and tears in their eyes of the great power of the white man, dressed in black, son of the sun, who took his meals when a little sun he kept in his pocket told him, who was guided in his travels by a little turning needle, who could kindle a sliver of wood on his sleeve, and who attracted foxes while reading a book. Oh the great man, the great man!

Today Innonarana seemed convinced that he must impress me with his own merits and the genius of his nation. He must not be content with swallowing three kilograms of raw meat a day, lying on his back on his polar bear skin or smoking his Lilliputian pipe. So he too began to sing, going through his whole medicine man's repertoire.

After this musical exhibition he wanted to reveal himself as an artist. Taking from the shelf a round covered box just like the cake boxes in which the people of the Beaujolais keep their goodies, he made drawings on it with ochre and carbon mixed with oil. He depicted a scene of the caribou hunt and one of a whale hunt and gave me the box.

Then he searched out a skin bag he himself had made and complaisantly spread out its contents before my eyes, taking good care I should understand that these were very rare treasures such as not everyone had. His treasure consisted of sea shells, polished pebbles picked up on the shore, pebbles of jade and serpentine, roughly chipped arrowheads, as well as quite beautiful completed ones, a little miniature figure, some half finished pipes and many other knick knacks.

From this ethnological display he passed to geography. Taking a piece of charcoal he turned the box over and drew a sketch of the shoreline from the mouths of the MacKenzie to Franklin Bay showing the channel which connects the MacKenzie Delta to the Anderson, the Eskimo lake and the supposed Nicholson Island.

"You see," he said, "the country we live in is a large island." "That's what the Irkreleit [the Indians] say, too" I told him. "In fact, one can't reach this land except along some seashore. But it's not quite an island either, or rather it's a huge one - so large it occupies the whole hemisphere from north to south."

He waved his hand.

"Never mind. You agree our land is surrounded by salt water, so it's an island. That's what our legends say."

"And what do your legends say about it?" I asked.

"They say that the black beaver created two men far from here in the west on another great island, from that island they came ashore on this one of ours in order to hunt ptarmigan. The brothers killed some of the birds but then they began to dispute the ownership of some of them and soon got to fighting."

"Surely it was not worth fighting over so little" I interrupted. "When people are hungry, they don't reason" continued the chief. "Famine brought them to blows over so meagre a pittance."

"Was the land they came from not rich?" I asked the chief. "Oh yes, it is. Naterovik is a beautiful country to the west. It is much warmer than here and the sun shows its nose even in winter. But at that time it seems there was a famine there. Now things are quite different there. The Natervalinet are much richer and happier than we are." "And what was the outcome of the dispute?" I asked. "It resulted in a separation. One of the brothers stayed on our island and became our ancestor. The other returned to the island to the west and became the ancestor of the western Inuit - tchoublouraotit or whistlers, who do not wear labrets. We believe that Krablounet [white men] came from that same stock." Innonarana concluded with a polite smile.

"But you forgot the Irkreleit (the Indians). Where do they fit in?" "Well, they're not brave and illustrious people. They come, it is said, from the nits of our lice, as their name indicates. But," he finished, laughing no doubt in order not to offend Sida-Jen's self esteem, "I'm not sure about that."

The Chiglit have a strange manner of counting. I watched and heard the chief counting the marten and fox skins he had taken since the fall. He counted up to six - arbnati. After that he continued six one, six two, six three, etc. - arbnati aypa, arbnati illaa, arbnati tchitamat, etc., up to ten - krolit. These people were the first North Americans I had seen counting this way. To express tens they add the digits of the feet to those of the hand. Thus twenty is rendered by a whole man [i.e., his digits], thirty a man and two hands, forty by two men - innoun mallerok.

In counting the Eskimos add pantomime to words and touch their feet with their outstretched hands, which seems rational. But I could not understand why they did not express the number 100 - itchangnerk, which means cross or crossed, by marking a little cross with charcoal on some bit of wood whenever they had occasion to record it.

The Chiglit reckon days by the nights, months by the moon, and years by winters. They recognize more seasons, depending on the different states of the terrain, and the degrees of change the sun brings about on it than we do but they have no knowledge of hours or weeks or any other divisions of time not furnished to them by the stars.

Noulloumallok's knowledge in the matter of the legend raised his stature in my eyes and I showed my gratitude.

His companion, the scabby Iyoumatounak, had gone down the coast to contact a band of Eskimos who planned to go to Fort Anderson. So he could not display his talents to me, but his wife, the pretty Aoularena No 2, wanted to take his place by showing me what is involved in caring for an Eskimo household.

She began by wiping the stone lamp clean of the old sooty wicks and replacing them with new ones. Next she poured the oil left in the lamp over a piece of half frozen raw fish which she offered to me very gracefully. I declined politely and she swallowed the item at one mouthful. Then, holding the lamp in both hands, she licked it as neatly as a kitten licks a dish of milk.

Finally she rubbed the oil which had come off on her hands, nose and forehead, onto her face and the upper part of her body and into her hair with the satisfaction and coquetry of a little mistress.

Her toilette thus completed, she went out to fetch a large fish weighing about 10 kilograms (some of this kind reach 15), half thawed it out over the lamp and served it to us raw.

Eskimos are not the only ones to eat fish raw. It is well known that the Japanese rarely eat it otherwise. Herodotus relates the same of the riverside peoples of India. The Loucheux of the Yukon River on the Pacific coast eat raw a certain red oily fish - it is the same fish which is known as the candlefish, for it is so oily it can be lit.

The fish just brought in is one previously unknown in our museums, which Richardson of the Franklin expedition named *Salmo Mackenzii*. It is a salmonid like others of the Arctic zone such as the whitefish, but it doesn't look much like a salmon, having neither the shape, the red flesh nor the flavour of salmon.

It is a large fish with white oily flesh with a strong vulgar taste except when it has been caught in rocky waters. These things justify the name *inconnu* [which is also its English name] given to it by French Canadian voyageurs into these regions. The Loucheux call it *Shio*, a word which has no French meaning, and they name the Anderson River after it. *Schiow-Tchro nillen* - river of the large *inconnus*.

The Hare Indians call it *Si*, the Chipewyans *Beroulé* meaning the toothless one.

My hosts had a good store of this fish. In this area it is tasty. On Great Slave Lake it is detestable - only good enough for dog food or to make lamp oil.

Usually Eskimo store houses are simply built of ice blocks. Here there was instead a scaffold which carried, other than frozen fish and frozen meat covered by an oiled tarpaulin, clothing, the furs of animals which had been trapped, kayaks and the frame of the family's *umiak*, without the skins of the white whale which forms its body, the great "medicine" drums and other talismanic objects.

Above the top of the house the lustrous skin of the black fox trapped the day before waved in the breeze from the sea - it waved

like a flag from the pole on which it was suspended. It would stay there till the cold dried it out, for cold dries out washing and moist furs just as effectively as the wind and sunshine - the latter often spoils skins. The greater the cold the faster is the rate of evaporation.

During our meal Iyoumatounak returned from the village where he'd been to make some enquiries and now when we'd finished eating he left with his young and pretty better-half for Liverpool Bay, which was only four hour's walk from where we were. They went to prepare another house where the chief and his companion were to settle down soon, close to the stranded whale they'd heard about.

## CHAPTER VII. OUR VISITORS

Inuit women. — Children's clothes. — Neypatouna. — How Commander Pullen made seals come out of the sun. — My powers of evocation are recognized. — Irascibility of the Eskimos.

At last the visitors from the Coast, so ardently and so long expected by my hosts, arrived but as the house was so small all these Eskimos could not visit us at once. So they spread themselves out among different houses in the village and came to see us in small groups.

At first some women turned up. Among them was an old crone, extremely wrinkled, dark-skinned, decrepit, with a face like a mummy and with yellowish-white hair. The poor creature was ugliness itself with wild-looking eyes rimmed with red, her rictus sardonicus showed worn teeth. Her voice was raucous, sibilant, stifled and yet energetic. Poor woman, she must have suffered much during her long life to have become so horribly disfigured to an image of death personified.

She directed a long harangue, of which I understood nothing, at me. I could not even tell whether she was speaking affectionately or loading me with impertinences, for Sida-Jen was not there to translate. But her gestures and tone of voice, her air of an angry hyena, breathed such savagery that I very much wanted a translation of the words of this Witch of Endor.

Out of charity I gave her a bit of rolled tobacco, feeling this might be better than a reply, which she could hardly expect me to make under the circumstances.

A young woman was carrying a small child in the vast interior of her "dalmatic" which was belted with a rope over her loins. Inside its soft warm nest the child was quite bare. To breast feed it the mother merely had to lean forward for the baby's head to reach one of her breasts. This sight inspired me with great respect for young Eskimo mothers who have to endure long months of inconvenience at the hands of their offspring. In truth, we are inferior to primitives in matters of maternity. Who knows but that these ignorant pagans may not one day be the judges and accusers of a great many supposedly-civilized Christians?

A little five or six year old followed this sweet little mother, hanging on to the hem of her parka. The mother's love was displayed in the clothing of this little one. The child was dressed in caribou fawn skin, with an ear and rudimentary horn projecting from each side of its forehead. The animal's eyes had been replaced by bits of red cloth edged with white beads, its muzzle - forming the front of the head - hung down over the child's forehead and was decorated with three blue pearl-like stones attached to the nostrils. The rest of the costume from head to toe was sewn from this fawn skin.



The child looked so charming in this get-up that I asked the mother to let me sketch it. But as soon as she saw my paper, pencil and knife, she pulled the child against her legs as if to withdraw it from the application of my craft.

The child of another woman was dressed in a bluish lynx fur, the long silky hair of which gave the effect of a large cat, its hair fluffed up in anger. The lynx's head was missing - in its place a hood edged with long wolverine hairs had been attached. These reddish hairs radiate out around the heads of the Eskimos as a sort of diabolical aureole.

This child, moreover, was a real wanton; one would have thought him possessed.

As I was enthusing over these attractive dresses and smiling benignly at the mothers of the well-dressed little ones, General Bottom came in followed by a young man of about twenty-five called Neypatouna, and the scene changed altogether.

He crouched down on the floor, pushed back his hood and began to study me with that devout and ever-smiling expression which at first makes one take these people for simpletons or idiots.

He was a good-looking fellow but his eyes, oblique and blood-shot, looked evil. His skin was the colour of boiled lobster. Having studied me at his ease, he said briskly, "What have you come to do here, tsitle?"

"I am not called tsitle (fellow); I am called Katoun or Kratetsey (chief)."

"Alright, what do you want with us here, chief?"

"To see the Eskimos, for I love them ..."

"Oh, that's well thought," he answered.

All the while the mistrust expressed in his features showed he did not believe a word I said.

"All the same, what are you here for?" he insisted, "for after all, you are here for something. Could it be to see the frozen sea?"

"Precisely," I said, enchanted to see him ahead of my thoughts. "And if you will take me there, I'll follow with pleasure and I'll give you ..."

"But we're just about at the sea here, chief," he said. "It's there, very close, but I'm not going there now. I'll leave and go to Mitsi Paloum's where they say Mitsi Goddem (Mr. Gaudet) has arrived."

"That's right. We arrived at Fort Anderson together about two weeks ago. You like Mitsi Goddem, then?"

"Yes, he is a Krolearkoutchi (a Frenchman) whom I have seen often as a child at the Fort of the Irkreleit [literally Fort of the Indians, i.e. Fort MacPherson]."

"Well, if you want to see him at Fort Anderson, you will have to hurry. He is probably getting ready to leave, if he has not already done so."

Sida-Jen then told me that the Chiglit had an old grudge against Mr. Gaudet, for he had taken away a girl of the tribe who had later become the wife of an Orkney man, head of one of the Company posts.

Neypatouna looked from one to the other of us with defiance with his round, red-rimmed eyes, as if to seize our Loucheux words.

"Well, tsitle, what does the chief say?" he asked my Loucheux interpreter.

"This is what he says - he wants to see the frozen sea and the stranded whale."

"Oh, that's good. That's what Captain Pullen always told us when he came to see the sea in summer a long time ago. I was a child then, but I remember it well. When someone asked him 'Krablouna, what did you come here for?' he always answered, 'to see the frozen sea and to eat seal meat,' and that pleased us. And when he took out his great yellow copper tube with which he looked at the sun and the moon and we asked him, 'Krablouna, what do you see up there in the moon or the sun?' he always answered, 'ah, I see seals. I see that you'll soon be making a great killing of them. You will have plenty of meat for the winter,' and that pleased us."

"Oh, he was good and kind, that Captain Pullen, who made the seals come to us from the sun and the moon! Captain Pullen ..." he murmured abstractly and devoutly like some lazzarone invoking a saint's name.

I started to laugh but Neypatouna shot an oblique and angry glance at me saying, "Does the great man Petchitork also see seals in the moon?" he asked of Sida-Jen. "Does he have a great metal tube [telescope] to watch the seals?"

The poor Loucheux could hardly suppress his laughter, but he was scared of Neypatouna, reputedly a rough and very short-tempered character, so with a straight face, he said hesitantly, "I don't know. Perhaps ... yes, yes ... he can certainly make seals come, but ... but ... not from the moon."

"Oh," said the Eskimo, "where from then?"

"From the sea, but without the help of a metal tube. He speaks to a book and they come."

Faith quickly took over the Loucheux's off-the-cuff expedient. He already believed what he'd said.

Once more the Eskimo said, "Oh." His jaw dropped and he remained like a man lost in reflections too deep for his limited intelligence.

There was indeed enough to befog the head of a native. The young Eskimo had seen but two white men in these parts, Captain Pullen and myself, and both of them had the power to draw the seals, one from the moon by looking at it through a long tube, the other from the sea by talking to a book. These marvels of the first order were too difficult for him to understand.

Dazzled and convinced of my superiority, Neypatouna did not push his enquiries further. He pulled two of his oldest arrows out of his quiver and offering them to Alphonse, said "Tsitle," he said, "Ke, ke niouvertork; man, look, quick, buy them."

"Do you have a little tobacco you can let me have?" the Indian asked me. "If I refuse this fellow he's likely to jump me. I've known him a long time. All smiles as he is now, he's really wicked."

"My good friend, I've given you all I had. I've absolutely no more left, but I think, in spite of what you say, that the young man looks pleasant enough to me," I answered.

"I haven't any more," the General told him timidly.

"Ke, ke, keata, niouvertork! Quick, quick I tell you, buy them!" the Eskimo continued, reasonably at first, then ever more urgently.

"I have nothing, absolutely nothing," said Sida-Jen.

I could see the poor devil was trembling. He was worried, for none of our protectors - the two masters of the chief's house, were there, not even their wives. One might have thought they'd decamped on purpose to expose us to the assaults of those who did not know us.

At this new refusal, politely, almost humbly as it had been spoken, Neypatouna became purple with rage. His pale lips were drawn to his teeth and they showed a tremor of controlled anger. His blood-shot eyes looked furious but he remained immobile and speechless. One could not have found better examples in a mental asylum.

I felt obliged to make my most extreme big eyes at him and to show him the trap door with an imperious gesture.

He hesitated a moment, still speechless and still trembling, but I stared at him without batting an eyelid as if he were some fierce animal. He gave a sigh, put back his arrows and, after having shot a look of hatred at the Loucheux, he took off.

Only my presence had saved Sida-Jen from a knife thrust. Apart from Neypatouna's outburst of anger which he was, however, able to control, I had nothing to complain of in my hosts or visitors.

One of my needles found on the ground by a little boy was brought back to me. Anywhere else, and in all other circumstances, the child would have stolen a thousand of them from me.

A button which had come off my waistcoat was also brought to me. Had we all been together at Fort Anderson, they would have cut them all off behind my back. The small bag which contained all my goods was never opened. On another occasion, while I was at a Hudson Bay Company post, some Eskimos forced the locks of this same bag and robbed me of its contents.

These people are truly hospitable, in the manner of the Bedouins; hospitality to a stranger under their roof is to them a sacred duty which is never violated. But once you have passed out into their desolate steppes or left the corridors of their snow houses, they will rob you or perhaps even kill you, yet while you are living with them, you are a sacred, inviolable being.

This is praiseworthy. It is a virtue, a very ancient one which civilized man has tended more and more to forget. It is the right of sanctuary applied to the domestic hearth which ennobles, exalts and consecrates the latter as formerly it did the altars of our ancestors and those of the Hebrews.

Generally, all the relations published by navigators on the Eskimos have praised them a great deal from the point of view of morals. In my opinion, this praise has been too pompous to be sincere or perhaps they praised the unworthy.

Myself, I cannot give testimony to the opposite effect, having never been witness to any reprehensible actions by Eskimos. I will only say that the state of nudity, often complete, in which both sexes indulge from extreme youth, can hardly induce chastity. No doubt the fact that they are used to it from infancy reduces the dangerous effects such nudity would have in young people brought up according to the laws of decency and Christian morals. Nevertheless, it is true that they permit themselves shameless behaviour, which among ourselves is seen only in a class of people incapable of blushing.

Above I have excused them up to a point about their habitual and inveterate immodesty, less blameworthy with them than it would be with us, but I cannot approve of the practice itself.

The Eskimos do blush sometimes, namely when having performed a theft, told a lie or played a trick on someone and they have been detected by the person who was to have been duped.

This proves that the scale of their morality does not reach high for they do not feel that these acts are evil or unjust if they are not detected. I must add, however, that I have known plenty of civilized people who were no more honest than Eskimos and who professed the same theory.

A people which has no healthier ideas than this and no higher conception of honour, justice or virtue, merits little confidence for it is evidently degraded and corrupt. But it remains to be decided whether the Eskimos are worse than the mass of Christians who have been misled into a systematic infidelity. I believe they are not.

## CHAPTER VIII. A JUGGLING PERFORMANCE

A juggling scene. — Why I did not get to see the Arctic Ocean. — The juggling-rotating spindles like those of the ancient Chaldeans. — Farewell.

Iyoumatounak's journey was short. In less than four hours walking, and Eskimos travel very slowly, he had reached the Coast and he was back the next day. I had proposed to go with him and he had agreed to this. But General Bottom's fears at being left behind prevented me from carrying out this plan on which I had set my heart.

But it did not seem to matter so much for I was to return to the Coast with Mr. Murdoch MacLeod in a month and with Mr. MacFarlane in May to spend the summer there.

Having lived only four hour's walk from the shore of the Arctic Ocean where from the chief's hut I could see the cliffs of the coastal hills, I could say without lying that I had gone as far as the Ocean and yet who would believe it? I did not go to the very shore, I did not see the sea in spite of my immense desire to do so; the demands of the security of my servant made it my duty to abstain from going.

When I reflect on this now, I don't understand myself. One must have lived for years in isolated countries, to have become accustomed to the savagery and the desert, have counted on so many subsequent journeys, to understand why on one particular occasion one did not take a few steps further to have the satisfaction of saying, 'I went to such and such a place; I saw this and that.'

It is an oddity of many great travellers. They say to themselves, 'What shall I see a few leagues further on that I don't see here? Is it worthwhile bothering for so little when I have come so very, very close that no one will believe I did not see my objective?'

Can you understand the man who crossed France to see the Mediterranean and who, without going further, stopped a league short of Marseilles? Or the provincial from Bordeaux who set out to see Paris and turned back at the suburbs? You cannot — both were absurd. But one can understand people, inhabitants of the Mediterranean littoral who, having lived since childhood a league from the sea, have only seen it from afar from their hilltops, without having felt any urge to go to the very shore, for are they not dwellers of the Coast?

One can conceive of people in the suburbs of Paris who pass away their lives on the edge of the great city without ever having seen the Louvre, or the Arc de Triomphe, for are they not Parisians?

Well, so it happened to me as to many others. I'd gone to the Coast of the Arctic Ocean without seeing it. Later I descended the Yukon River in Alaska for half its course without pushing on to the Behring Sea. I could have travelled over all of the great lakes of the Northwest in every direction and I did not do it. Why? Well, because I had become an inhabitant of the Northwest. I expected to spend all my life there, nor was I then thinking of publishing my travels. My curiosity would not have been satisfied by a few more leagues of ice or snow I had not already seen; they would have taught me nothing new. Are my actions understandable now?

On this occasion I had good reason to restrain my curiosity. Poor General Bottom had no doubt been mocked and threatened during his walks about the hamlet. He considered himself a mere pawn in the hands of the Eskimos if I were to leave him even for half a day's journey. So I stayed.

But why was Iyoumatounak frowning when he entered the igloo to sit on the platform beside his better half who was in the costume of Léda. Why did he seem to want to intimidate me by telling me that I'd given him an awful ointment and that he was going to throw all my bad medicines away?

Was the man jealous of the affability his wife had shown me or was he hurt in his feelings as part owner of the house at the expulsion of Neypatouna from it?

A discontented Eskimo lowers his head as far as it can go and if you talk to him he will not reply except through a third person. This is what Iyoumatounak did on his return home.

"Tsitle," he said to Sida-Jen, "the white chief made me rub my head with a bad ointment, the buttered biscuit he gave me to eat on the journey to this place is bad medicine. I found no whale blubber on the Coast. They'd eaten it all and the white chief's ointment and biscuit have brought this about. Tell him that, Tsitle."

"Ask him whether he wants an emetic or a purgative," I answered Sida-Jen.

"I shall make magic against the white chief," the Eskimo answered with a fierce air. "He will learn what it costs to give bad medicine to a Chiglit warrior."

Right away he placed himself directly opposite me on the platform and picked up a flexible stick which ended in a ball and began to vibrate it angrily, imparting a rotating motion to it and accompanying this with a chant intermingled with peevish words and violent commands as if he addressed some being subject to his orders. Soon, as he got worked up more and more, his chant became a series of cries, then bawls. It was always "Yan, yan, eh" in the same rhythm, but accompanied by contortions, frightful grimaces and a sort of convulsion.

The unfortunate fellow was dripping sweat; he wheezed, rolled his eyes, foamed at the mouth and threw off the fragmentary garments he had still been wearing. He got onto all fours like an animal and drivelled at the mouth. In short, he acted like a devil and it really looked as if the man had vanished to be replaced by a brute, but a thinking and speaking brute. Is there anything more diabolical than that?

While acting in this insensate manner he had broken his magic spindle. He replaced it with his long knife, and red-faced and foaming like one possessed, he came closer and closer to me in a state of unbelievable superexcitation.

He looked frightful, horrible. His face had lost its human form and his eyes seemed to want to stab me. His face now almost touched mine. I could feel his breath and his eyes like those of an angry hyena were boring into mine.

Noulloumallok was away. I threw a glance at the Aoularenas. Iyoumatounak's enthusiasm had infected them, too; they chanted and screeched the same "eh yan, yan, eh" in tones so piercing that it hurt my ears. They, like the juggler, had taken out their knives and beat their thighs or the palm of the left hand with them, in rhythm with the song. Their expressions were as vicious as the man's. One would have said that all three were intoxicating themselves with noise, cries and contortions as others intoxicate themselves with alcohol or tobacco, to give themselves the courage to carry out some evil deed.

Some plot most assuredly had been hatched against me on the Coast. It has always seemed to me that this young man had been ordered to scare me in order to stop me from travelling further or to test my temper. For this troop of pirates it was something so new and unexpected to see a young stranger, weak and without the least defence, venturing about among them that one may pardon their superstitions about me.

They wanted to know whether their devil was stronger than mine, if it could make my heart bound with fear, weaken my courage and set me trembling before them, as Neypatouna had trembled before my gesture the day before. Had that been the case, I would be lost and Sida-Jen as well.

He just now showed a greenish tint. He expected Iyoumatounak's knife to pierce my belly any moment.

But I remained calm, cold, unmoved, even contemptuous. I fixed the sorcerer with resolute eyes, without anger or irritation, but with indifference.

When I felt his breath in my face and my ears were ringing with his clamour, when I saw the point of his knife wandering about an



inch from my chest, I touched his arm and pushed him back softly but with resolution, and said, "Ke, tayma; Look, that's enough."

Then I picked up my book, turned my back to him and quietly started to read.

This simple action stopped his chanting and crying right away. But he could not calm down his body as quickly for it was seized by a violent trembling. No doubt he believed himself at this moment to have fallen prey to his familiar spirit.

Then with a smile he picked up his clothes, but I could see he was at the end of his strength and had all but lost his voice. His entire body was covered in perspiration. In this state I believe I could have knocked him down with little effort in spite of his tallness and his Chaldean corpulence.

"Ouninnin," he murmured feebly, "it was only a joke."

"No doubt," I replied, and continued to read.

But now it was another story. The poor fellow imagined I would now give him, by means of my book, a sample of my sorcery and so renew the performance Atahualpa<sup>5</sup> gave to Pizarro. Iyoumatounak took my book, considered it, turned it over and over, put it close to his ear, then put himself gravely to murmur unintelligible sounds while fumbling with the pages. Finally he let the little book drop and burst out laughing.

I had beaten him by my magic and so now he laughed at my prayers. However, matters went no further and the young madman said no more about getting rid of what he called my bad medicines.

Next day before breakfast the chief seemed anxious. He said, "Chief, I'm soon going to the sea. Iyoumatounak says there is plenty of whale meat there."

The young man had therefore been lying the day before when he said there was no more.

"All the better," I said to Noulloumallok, "I have been waiting to see the Arctic Ocean and to stay there with you. It's so close, only four hour's march."

"Certainly, yes, it's quite near. We're really almost on the shore here, but it's no use," he added, his face once more darkening over and showing obvious displeasure.

"Why is it useless? I shall pay you for my keep and I shall be no burden to you."

"But it's no good, I tell you chief," he answered while waving his hands briskly with his airs of a great man. "Down there I won't be in my place. I'll live with my father-in-law. His house is even smaller. You must return before I leave here."

"And when will you leave for the Coast?"

"In three or four days, at the most. I'm hungry for whale meat, you see. I'm hungry for ortchok and fresh oil. I shan't stay on here."

It was always the same round-about. Why did the man want to get rid of me like this before even ten days had passed?

Well, I've told the reader the reason at the beginning of these pages. I did not know it myself until eight years later when this unnatural father put a public seal on his shame by repudiating the wife of his choice, the mother of his child, in order to marry his own daughter.

The Eskimos themselves informed the whites of this outrage which horrified the pagans concerned as much as it did the Christians.

It was only because of this that Noulloumallok wanted to rid himself of me as soon as possible. I was an obstacle to his guilty passion. But even nowadays when he is despised because of his misconduct and has lost his position as chief, for he will not stop living in sin, he still speaks of my bravery and my good humour with friendly admiration. Poor Noulloumallok, unfortunate Illamma!

Fifteen years later in 1877 I saw his wife, Aoularena No 1, once more at Fort McPherson. She was sad - she was then in the power of another master and still wept over her incestuous daughter.

There is a certain degree of immorality which is not overlooked by natural people even when they have the reputation of low moral standards. There is thus among pagans a certain public conscience before which the opinions of each individual must plead. This observation rejoices one's soul.

There are constraints and even unspeakable heartaches among those who enjoy the greatest degree of liberty imaginable, and this consoles those who have less liberty.

## CHAPTER IX. NAVIKAN

Arrival of strangers. — The charming ideal of primitive man. — Reciprocal defiance. — The great man Navikan Pabian. — Indiscreet curiosity. — Are the Eskimos happy? — Sad life of their womenfolk. — Great chief and great thief.

Three days before I left the village where Noulloumallok was chief a dozen Eskimos arrived from the coast, some from as far as the mouth of the Mackenzie.

Rarely have I seen such politeness in a bourgeois salon or heard more banal compliments than were exchanged between my hosts and the newcomers, with affable and even obsequious airs and amiable smiles. Rarely have I heard such honeyed words and trite compliments or involved phrases of praise than I did then in Noulloumallok's hovel.

This confirms my impression that some Chinese or Japanese blood is not altogether foreign to my Chiglit.

This assault of politeness between the two parties lasted almost a quarter of an hour. It transported me far from the Indians and their rusticity. Up to then the Eskimos were the first North American aboriginal people among whom I'd seen our rules of politeness held in honour, though they have of course not borrowed them from us.

After the exchange of compliments we enjoyed a change of the visual decor. Namely our visitors soon showed us their "white hearts." One might have thought they were getting ready for a wrestling match, a swimming contest or a festive boxing match.

Actually they were getting ready for the steam bath which was inevitable when so many people are gathered in so restricted a space; the hut was about to become an oven. I always admire the natural simplicity of the Eskimos in these disrobings. They don't know what shame is. One doesn't know how to characterize their lack of it for they don't give the matter a thought. They don't laugh at one another and make no pointed remarks. They are even scandalized if one makes an indecent remark or casts an ambiguous look at them. That's why I compare them to little dogs which can't blush because God created them without trousers.

This is what I would say to those who absolutely insist that the Eskimos are innocence itself - "the charming ideal of primitive man as he emerged from the hands of the Creator, etc.," as a certain Englishman of our times has called them.

As to those who believe the Eskimos are as deeply sunk in evil and concupiscence as we are ourselves, I will quote the reply given to me by a young Eskimo when I reprimanded him about his lack of shame in front of strangers.

"Why should I feel embarrassed in front of them? They are not white men. They are neither more respectable nor more debauched than I am. We are all of us worth as much as another. You don't know us. What's the point of feeling embarrassed in front of them?"

I find this reasoning logical even in its very cynicism and when I consider our own prudery it seems to me that we are imbeciles. Don't get angry, reader, but put your hand over your heart. We are often worth less than the Eskimos and yet we force ourselves all our lives to appear better than we are. We live in hypocrisy, we cheat others, we delude ourselves and get nothing in return but misery and constraint. We despise others and yet are despicable ourselves for one is never deceived by the false virtue and duplicity of others.

Would it not be simpler and more comfortable if certain virtues have been denied to us, to show ourselves as we really are without pretending to have those virtues or trying to borrow them? We would put all the world at ease and if we were to damn ourselves we would at least have enjoyed our vicious desires for some time. But to live here below in constraint only to suffer more in another life - isn't that the peak of aberration? I will be told "we must avoid scandal. Scandal, says wisdom is more serious than falsehood." And I understand this because scandal is at least connected to truth. One degree of truth is worth more than a hundred of falsehood.

O this constraint of manners - is it more exacting and less logical than the parish priest? At any rate, this is what one gains by abandoning God's laws - the police in this world and the devil in the next. Not an attractive prospect.

I find the Eskimos more rational and sensible than we are. I don't believe they are without concupiscence but they are more sincere and because of this happier than ourselves. That's all.

However it may be about the virtue of the Eskimos, these "charming ideals of primitive man" began to exhale a certain strong odour which was hardly comparable to that of essence of roses.

Under the influence of these walking stoves, Noulloumallok's hut was converted into a steam bath, began to melt and sweat, moisture began to condense on the roof and walls. Tic, tic, tic, the drops fell, singly at first, then in groups and soon in little streams and everyone began to mop the sleeping platform, his back or his head, the roof and the walls with handfuls of lichen or moss or bits of skin.

There were twenty-two of us in this space of twelve feet square already occupied by utensils, stone lamps and vessels containing water or oil. One can imagine to what temperature the atmosphere in this little apartment was suddenly raised. A great cauldron of boiled meat which was carried in and deposited in the

middle of the igloo added another degree of heat to what was already an excess. A dense fog spread among our guests, partly hiding them from one another.

They looked like an assembly of the Olympian gods among the clouds.

Noulloumallok seemed to be in a hurry to see the heels of his visitors for he often complained about the soakings from above his head that he was receiving, but the demands of etiquette made him laugh about it all to show perfect good humour without revealing a glimpse of his impatience.

I've come to the conclusion that this long suffering of the Eskimos in their contacts among themselves is not worth the plain dealing, the frank familiarity of the Dene Indians, however often the latter may approach grossness. The Inuit control themselves because they fear one another. They hide their fear and hate of one another under a mask of sweet urbanity but they are ready to draw the knife at the first altercation.

I understood this when I saw Noulloumallok and Iyoumatounak seize their great knives as soon as they saw our visitors and noted that they did not lay them down while the visitors remained. I understood it even better when I saw the great man Innonarana gesticulate with his sixteen inch long blade under the nose of his closest neighbour, the great man Navikan, chief of the Tareormeout or people of the sea, a downright brigand if there ever was one.

Ah, we are here among real savages. The Eskimos in spite of all their politeness, their quasi Chinese airs and graces, the pretentious grimaces of their women and girls, are real savages - the only ones to be found in northern Canada.

Navikan Pabian is a great devil of a fellow in his sixties with grey hair, a great nose like an eagle's beak with a crafty and perfidious look in spite of the eternal smile which plays over his sarcastic mouth. His satyr's face resembles that of Henry IV [of France] a little but it is without the King's kindly expression.

In the eyes of both whites and Eskimos, Navikan is a villain, an assassin. His misdeeds are inscribed on his face in so many lines of blue tattooing which pass over his nose from one ear across to the other and show that he has committed murder. These horrible lines always mark the Torkrota [murderer].

This tattooing is not that of a warrior, even less does it mark a hero. No, it indicates murder for torkrota comes from torkro - death, and torkron - a murder.

Thus, even among the Eskimos this sign which I believe was originally a stigma of condemnation imposed by custom, inspires abhorrence and fear.

On his side Navikan throughout this friendly interview never let go of his weapon, a cutlass that must have been traded from the west from some Russian or American whaler.

All the others, even the little children, were armed. Even Sida-Jen, perhaps for form's sake, had pulled out his pocket knife and played with it. I was the only empty-handed one.

Navikan leaned over toward me with a fawning smile and felt my pockets with the unconcern of a pickpocket.

"Ke! Pitiktsi aria kitor? Say where is your little gun (revolver)?"

"I don't have a revolver or any weapon," I answered him. "I don't need one for I have no enemies and my heart is white."

The great chief smiled but made no answer to my allusion for it condemned him too much.

Noulloumallok once more told the new visitors the story he had already told everyone we had met on our journey or who had come to his house. He told them how I ate, in what strange way I slept in a fur sleeping bag, how I wiped my nose in a square cloth which I then carefully put in one of my pockets, which he called an old woman's paps, an idea his listeners rejected with disgust. He imitated how I sang, coughed, sneezed and spat, to the great delight of the newcomers who did not hesitate to laugh at me to my face.

I had much ado to preserve my dignity for when Noulloumallok's recital was over Navikan Pabian wanted me to condescend so far as to repeat all these operations in the white man's way in front of him and his people. So to these people of the polar seashore I was a sort of ridiculous savage or at least a curious barbarian, a sort of travelling clown who was to put himself through his paces for their amusement. Had there been such a thing as a zoo or a circus in these parts, that would have been the end of me. I would swiftly have been put in a cage labelled "white-skinned barbarian, intractable, from the country of the hot sun."

I must admit that like the people of primitive tribes who come to Paris to see the Seine, I submitted to the desires of these good people with good grace and sang, coughed, wiped my nose, spat and read, to their great admiration.

I did, however, dispense myself from dancing for them, for I considered this incompatible with my personal dignity.

All this did not prevent me from a great deal of suppressed laughter, just as I'm sure it does not prevent the red Indians or Ceylonese who exhibit themselves in our great cities from laughing inwardly at us.

At last when the cauldron was emptied of meat, when all the news had been exchanged between both parties, when everyone had satisfied his curiosity about my watch and my compass, my box of matches, pocket knife and my books, studying as well as feeling these objects, and when above all they finished their examination of my person, the owner of these absurd ridiculous things, the assembly dispersed, after its members had dressed themselves once more, for fear that the melting roof of our igloo might come down on their heads.

Even so, there were still a dozen of us that passed the night on a sleeping platform meant for five. So it was a tight squeeze and I slept little more that night than during the first one I'd spent in a snowhouse.

To pass the time on such occasions I philosophise. I envisaged all aspects of the lives of these savages and tried to estimate the degree of happiness they experienced. The conclusion I reached was that considered in themselves without any comparison with the life of more fortunate peoples whom they do not know and of whose riches and happiness they are not aware, the Eskimos must be the happiest people under the moon. They are at least as content with their lot as the polar bear and the Arctic wolf in the midst of the polar ice, as the seal whose meat feeds them or the white whale whose oil they drink like bitters before breakfast.

Is it necessary to demonstrate this by argument or reference to authority? It follows from the fact the Eskimo does not complain about his fate, that he is satisfied and even glories in his hut of wood and snow, that he is so content with a strip of sand and tundra along the earth's most inhospitable ocean that it does not even occur to him to seek a more hospitable climate; that this man is happy, very happy.

He no more has political than he has poetic ideas. To speak of such to him results in him taking you for a madman. His politics are the hunt and fish catching, his poetry his dear Eve's belly, a good pipe and a platter of melted blubber.

Does carnal man need more on this earth in order to be happy? In regard to religious feelings the Eskimo has none of the fears which faith puts in the heart of the believer. He knows of no pious deeds he should perform in order to merit the right of entry into his submarine Elysium, he does not know that his crimes in this life will cause him suffering in another. All he knows is that after death his soul will enter the sea in order to fish there, to eat blubber and to drink seal oil with the hordes of his ancestors, just as in life.

What surprised me most of all at first about the Eskimos is that they treat women more humanely and with more tenderness than the Indians. One does not, as among the latter, see women whose noses have been slit in some moment of uncontrollable jealousy. This fact redounds to the honour of the Eskimos.

But I soon saw the reason for the difference. It is due merely to the complete subjection of Eskimo women. Among this people of bandits women let themselves be sold, bought, traded, borrowed, treated as "filles de joie." They have lost all shame, all coyness, reserve and all their pride. They behave as if they belonged to a conquered race which the men have assimilated by marrying the women and girls. I can't otherwise explain their abject servility. That is the sole basis of the superiority of Eskimo over red Indian husbands. They are the sultans or keepers of their women - not one of them is a husband in the real sense.

Next day at four in the morning Navikan Pabian's band continued on their way to Fort Anderson, profiting by the cool early morning hours during this season of long days when the sun is already strong enough about noon to make it too hot and tiring for fur-clad travellers to keep on the move. Navikan pulled at my feet in gesture of farewell.

"Katoun, anakranan, tsavitoranouk - au revoir chief, we are leaving."

And as I scarcely moved in response, eager for sleep on the now less crowded platform as I was, he repeated more loudly, "we are leaving, I tell you."

"Well, that's good, leave then" I replied holding out my hand to him. Then pulling my cover over my head I returned to the arms of Morpheus.

My carefree manner in this little scene excited and caused happy laughter and admiration among the Eskimos gathered for the equivalent of a stirrup cup. But at the time I did not understand why. Only much later did one of the participants explain it to me.

"Oh! Kratetsey, that time you gave us the greatest proof of confidence and of friendship we had ever received from a white man. The ship captains who had visited us before you, were always armed when they were among us and when they spent a night with us, one of them always remained on guard smoking his pipe while the others slept. The Hudson Bay Company traders behave the same way when they are with us. But you are the first unarmed white man who has come among us and who has slept under one of our roofs with the confidence and abandon of a child. For this all the Eskimos feel grateful to you."

These gross and savage people thus have some heart, it is accessible to good actions, to courage and generosity, for it is



energetic and even violent. Alas when I awoke at nine o'clock it was quite another story and I had to curb my enthusiasm. Such is man under all skies and in all countries, when he exalts - he soon feels a constraint to despise, double creature, half angel and half demon that he is.

Illamma came in just then and delivered a long tirade of which I could only understand the words takelou (snowshoes), kreymirk (dog) and mitko (dried meat). Sida-Jen was not there to interpret but my memory was good enough that with an effort I could converse with the chief.

"What is it?" I asked him.

"Well" he said, "the fact is that Navikan who calls himself a great chief is after all a torkrota [murderer] and also a tigiliktork (a thief)."

"And what did he steal from you."

"From me, nothing. He fears me too much for that. I'm tough, I am. You don't know me yet, I can see that. Things would not settle down quietly if he robbed me."

"Yet you've never killed anyone," I said to him with a confident air. "Your nose is not tattooed."

He started to laugh.

"No, that's true," he said with a little grimace of modesty which made me laugh. "But it's your confidence the great man Pabian has abused - he robbed you while you slept. That's shocking," he said, becoming animated. "He should have respected my house - he has violated the laws of hospitality and shamed me. But," he added as if this improved matters, "he is not of our tribe, you see. He is from the Mackenzie - he is a wicked Kravane while we who are good people are the Irtane."

"And what did he steal, chief?"

"He took your snowshoes and your food - not all of it, only half."

Now I understood Navikan's grin as he saw me coolly go back to sleep. It hid more than enthusiasm, it was the false grin of a cunning fox.

"You must not take this too seriously," the chief continued with a simpering expression. "The Inuit are not all alike. They are not like the Irkreleit [Indians]. There are good ones and better ones, bad ones and worse ones."

"As everywhere," I replied and went on to ask, "where is Sida-Jen?"

"He is running after your lost dog, for only one is left. Navikan took the other one from you."

This news annoyed me more than that of the theft of the food and the snowshoes for I know that the good Mr. MacFarlane needed the dogs and deprived himself of the opportunity to use them in lending them to me. He had recommended them highly to me and on the Arctic Circle a dog is worth as much as a horse elsewhere.

While we awaited General Bottom breakfast was served. The Loucheux must have feared a telling off from the trader a great deal to have resolved to go alone after the Eskimos who had left at four a.m.

"Chief," said Noulloumallok during breakfast, "I thank you for having deigned to sleep and eat in my humble home. You have shown us that your heart is white and knows no fear like that of the Irkrelit who flee from us, or that of the whites who come to us armed with revolvers. You carry no weapons because your heart is good toward us. Thank you."

"But I can't stay here much longer. I am getting short of food and down on the coast I shall not be in my own place but in my father-in-law's. You will therefore do well to leave with the first group of people who pass on their way to the fort.

No doubt it was to induce you to do just that that Navikan stole your snowshoes, your meat and your dog."

In saying this the chief betrayed himself as involved in the business too but I pretended to take no notice of these thieves' explanations.

Alphonse came back without the dog or the food at ten o'clock. The Eskimos had had too much of a headstart for him to be able to overtake them or perhaps fearing that they would molest him, he did not really try to catch up with them.

Two days later at nightfall another group of natives came to us from the coast. There were three men - Anhoutchinak, Inontakrark and Tchimitsiark, followed by their wives and a small child. They too had come from the Mackenzie along the channel I've named after Napoleon III. All claimed to be chiefs in contrast with the great chiefs Navikan and Noulloumallok, who with a little air of modesty pretended not to be chiefs at all. But I accept them as chiefs in the manner of the ancient Franks who, beyond the devil, recognized no masters but themselves or rather their own swords, just as the

Eskimos acknowledge no masters beyond Tornrark (who reminds me of the Scandinavian Thor) and their tsavirasiark (knives).

In accord with this outlook any man who is not a demon is a chief and a great man.

## CHAPTER X. RETURN TO FORT ANDERSON

Anhoutchinak and Inontakrark. — Benevolent attack. — The General routed. — A thief confounded. — Departure from the Anderson.

I need not recount my return journey to Fort Anderson in detail. I left Noulloumallok's home with Anhoutchinak and Inontakrark. The first of these had a wife whose name was also Aoularena, like the wives of my two recent hosts. Decidedly, I told myself, Eskimos must love needles. The word must seem very poetic to them for them to use it so freely as a name.

The first night I camped with my companions in a snow house. But as soon as we reached the tree line and could see some scattered spruce in the gullies along the river, Alphonse and I went to camp there in the open air, glad to be able to fill our lungs with the cold night air and to stretch out our tired limbs in front of a fire of scented spruce. After this we travelled on our own.

On the morning of the third day I enjoyed the spectacle of the most perfect parhelion I ever saw on the Arctic Circle and God knows I have seen many. The weather was fine, the sun was growing red while a fine mist like a lady's veil hung in the air and dispersed itself in the form of extremely tenuous prisms of ice which fell from the sky as the sun, which was about to rise, produced spangles of golden coruscations.

These conditions produce the phenomenon of a parhelion which is even more remarkable.

The sun suddenly appeared flanked by a dozen false suns arranged in a cross on three concentric circles around it. Each of these false suns was the centre of a rainbow, which, where they touched others at their tangents, formed eight more, rather paler sun spectres. Finally the real sun stood in the centre of a glistening cross in unequalled splendour.

I had never before and I have never since seen a parhelion of comparable splendor. In a blue cloudless sky it glittered like a splendid decoration of diamonds on the blue uniform of some king.

The same day an event occurred which did not redound to the courage of General Bottom, in spite of his martial nickname. The encounter showed me how little faith a white man can place in the bravery of an Indian in defence against Eskimos or against Indians of another tribe.

We had just finished our lunch in the same spot where thirteen days earlier we had stopped with Innonarana. It was at the end of the portage which cuts across a bend of the river. As we descended to the river Alphonse suddenly said to me in a scared tone, "There is Navikan's band coming back from the Fort."

Glancing at the frozen river I did indeed see a group of Eskimos with their weapons and baggage heading for the coast.

"All the better," I said to Sida-Jen, "now I will at least get back my snowshoes. I'm tired of travelling without them."

But the poor lad had something else on his mind.

"They are going to rob us of everything," he said. "It's plain you don't know them. If you're afraid, we are lost. It's when these people are on their way home from the trading forts that they perform their misdeeds."

In reply I merely laughed in the young man's face, trembling as he was.

He spoke up.

"You think they're good, don't you?" he said with an attempt at humour. "Well, you'll see. It'll be a miracle if they don't rob us and that is the least these murderers of my people are liable to do."

His certainty of our danger intimidated me a little and I began to believe my "general," but I continued to despise his warnings just to give him heart.

"If that's so," I told him, "it's best to put on a brave show and to risk everything to save everything. At least I'll defend my property and perhaps my sang-froid will impress them."

A few minutes later we were surrounded by the Eskimos on the frozen river and not in the way Indians meet whites with handshakes, or with the Eskimo greeting, nose to nose, but acting like a bunch of bandits. Two young men stopped the only dog I still had to pull my little bit of baggage. Others surrounded me closely so that I was separated from Alphonse and lost sight of him. Then, all the while laughing wantonly and calling me chief, father, Krablouna, great man, and so on, they began to ransack my pockets like highwaymen.

The women excelled above all in this pickpocket's work. I was astonished at their impudent audacity.

Without getting angry, which would not have done any good, and with a joviality equal to theirs, I distributed a few good raps on the head among the men and squeezed the fists of the women till they cried for mercy to teach them to be less impertinent.

I took back from them without pity everything of mine they had grabbed and which they still insisently demanded - my glasses, handkerchief, compass, my pocket knife, watch and chain, my box of

matches and my rosary, as well as the cords for my snowshoes. Thus they took nothing from me and now even excused themselves, saying that they had acted merely out of curiosity to make sure that I was unarmed, that I really had a white heart as had been claimed.

Convinced that I was unarmed and therefore without evil intentions, they broke out into endless cries of admiration. "Krayanapa!" and "Krayanana!"

Finally they said, "Ke! ke! tsaviktaoun! Quick, quick get on your way."

It was only then that turning about I saw that I was alone. What had happened to poor General Bottom and my sled? They were already a kilometre away, one running behind the other without any concern for me.

"What's this?" I said to the Eskimos. "What happened. What did you do to that man?"

"We don't know anything about it," they replied. "It's always like this between us and the Irkreleit."

At last they shook my hands in the English manner with a joy which seemed to have been increased by the sight of the general's panic, then they moved off calling out to me ringing "Krayanayne" and "Illarayane." Two words which are the equivalent of thanks or great thanks and I am satisfied.

For as long as I could see and hear them they continued to make the river valley echo with these same cries.

As I had no snowshoes, it took me an hour to catch up with my general. My snowshoes had not been in the baggage of the Eskimos. They told me Navikan had either hidden them under the snow or had returned them to Mr. MacFarlane. Navikan they said, was still at the fort with one or two of his men.

When at last I caught up with my Alphonse he was still livid and out of breath. I reproached him gently for having saved himself in such a cowardly way, abandoning me to the mercy of the Eskimos without even letting me know of his flight.

He answered, "I had plenty of other things to do than to warn you of my departure. Didn't you see what went on while the Eskimos surrounded you and amused you?"

"Certainly not."

"So you didn't see that big chubby Neypatouna jump on me, knife in hand, and rob me of everything I had?"

"But no, no my poor friend. I thought the Eskimos were treating you as they treated me, or rather, I didn't think of you."

"Well they robbed me like enemies - they took my pipe and tobacco pouch with its contents, my flint and tinder, my pocket knife, my sunglasses, my rings and my spare pair of mocassins. They ransacked your sled and nearly took your blankets."

"But thank God they did not harm you, did they?"

"That's because I complied with their desires, while they stole my things Neypatouna held his great knife against my chest. He sneered at me and ground his teeth, warning me that if I tried to defend my property or cry out he would strike."

"And then," he went on more softly, "you understand you would have been lost too. Eskimos are not dangerous while you are staying with them but when you leave. The cat is satisfied to play with the mouse and to let it live as long as it stays with the cat, but when the mouse tries to get away then puss kills it with one stroke of the paw. That's how it is."

Navikan Pabian was still at Fort Anderson when I arrived on foot without snowshoes and with only one dog pulling my sled. God knows it was not a glorious return. I found him in Mr. MacFarlane's house. As soon as he saw me he came toward me with the most wheedling mannerisms and wanted to shake my hand. I refused him mine. I did not even want to look at him and walked past while telling him, "You are no more than a wicked thief."

I've said he looked somewhat like Henry IV, but what a difference in character.

"Have a care, sir," said Mr. MacFarlane, "you have to manage these people carefully. Don't be blunt like that to them. They're not Indians."

"All honest people should be treated with care," I said to him, perhaps a bit too emotionally, "but the crooks who merit it must at least be severely reprimanded when one has no other way of chastising them. That man stole one of your dogs from me as well as my provisions for the journey and my snowshoes while I was under a hospitable roof which he dishonored. He is no chief."

Navikan, the great man, made himself as humble as possible. He promised to return my snowshoes which he had buried in the snow outside the fort. He assured Mr. MacFarlane that my dog had followed him against his wishes, which was impossible, and that he had given it back to the company servants at the fort, which was true. Finally, instead of becoming angry, he made a thousand protestations of his respect and of his friendliness towards me. He said he was

well aware of the fact that he was in the wrong, that he had been detected in larceny, the only fault for which an Eskimo has any contrition, and he assured me it would not happen again.

I shook hands with him when he left.

Mr. MacFarlane was not displeased at the well merited dressing down I had given the rascal. All the more as he was thus saved from having to do it himself.

The three Eskimos and their wives who had set out with me and Alphonse did not arrive till the following day. I'd left them behind since the morning of the second day of our journey.

I had left my little handbag with them as my dog had too much of a load. I must bear witness that they gave it back to me intact, to Mr. MacFarlane's great astonishment. He told me these Eskimos had thus performed a prodigy of honesty so far without example in his experience.

"I think, sir," I said to him, "that the best way to correct a thief is to treat him like an honest man and to show confidence towards him. So far my system has worked on this first journey to the Eskimos except with Navikan, whom I should not have trusted."

"Many people are bad only because that is their reputation and they have lost hope of recovering a reputation of honesty. They ask only to live as honest men, to be treated as such, and that their past conduct be forgotten."

This then was my first excursion to the great Eskimos or Chiglit of Liverpool Bay in 1865. It was arranged between the amiable Mr. MacFarlane and myself that I would accompany him in May to Franklin Bay where we would pass the summer on the coast. I looked forward a great deal to this expedition which was only a month away. But a letter which arrived from my colleague at Fort Good Hope changed all my plans. He wrote that he was ill and could not manage and begged me not to prolong my absence but rather to hurry back as soon as possible.

I obeyed his wish and returned to Fort Good Hope shortly after my return to Anderson from the coast.

Alas I was out of luck. I found my companion in the best of health upon my arrival at Good Hope, but by then it was too late to think of Franklin Bay, the Arctic Ocean and the poor Eskimos for that year.



## BOOK 2. SUMMER EXCURSION TO THE GREAT ESKIMOS

### CHAPTER I. ITINERARY FROM FORT GOOD HOPE TO FORT MACPHERSON

Departure by canoe. — The Naotcha-Kotcho. — Abundance of fossils. — The first cape. — Cannonshot Reach. — The Narrows of the Mackenzie. — Arctic Red River. — Point Separation. — The mouths of the Mackenzie. — Break-up. — Appearance of the sun at midnight. — Historical. — The Peel River or Arveron. — Geographical errors of Franklin and Pullen. — The cold year. — Landslides.

Three years had passed since an epidemic in 1865 more than decimated the native peoples of the northwest. Oh, I was eager to return to the unfortunate Eskimos, to carry to them the words of peace of Him who sent his apostles to all people.

But my Superior was not at all inclined to acquiesce in this. There was a rumour that the Eskimos, exasperated by the disease which had nearly wiped them out in the autumn, had sworn to kill any white man who ventured into their barren lands.

I did not believe a word of this, but others were not of my opinion and I had to exercise patience.

Finally, in the spring of 1867, the episcopal interdiction was lifted. I was allowed to resume my journeys among these Arctic people with the double objective of geographical exploration and evangelisation. When I received this permission on Great Bear Lake, where I had passed the winter, I happily prepared to depart for the Arctic coast, but my confrere at Fort Good Hope begged me not to undertake the journey that year, for he himself wanted to see how the Eskimos would receive him while I took charge of the mission at Good Hope. His account of his journey when he returned was full of interest. He was lucky enough to reach salt water and to spend three or four weeks with the Eskimos, who treated him very well.

But it is not up to me to tell here of his journey. I've made it a point never to trespass in my neighbour's garden.

Thus, it was not until the following year, 1868, on the 9th of June, that I was able to resume my apostolic explorations.

The summer started with fine weather. Spring had been early and warm. The break-up of the Mackenzie had been exceptionally early. It occurred on May 26th and the spring run-off had been such that the river ran six metres above its normal level and threatened our wooden buildings. The ice piled up along the banks formed ramparts five or six metres high.

I left Good Hope in a birch bark canoe with two young Hareskin Indians called Jean Trou-Kweye (elongated lake), nicknamed Captain Ball, and the other, Jean Oullayan, or the little songster.

I steered, they paddled.

In order to offer the least temptation to the dishonest desires of the Inuit, I took very little baggage with me - no other clothing but what I was wearing, only one change of linen, my portable chapel and first aid kit, my compass, a watch, a thermometer, and some little articles which could be traded for food.

We also expected to rely on hunting and fishing for food. I therefore took along fish lines and hooks for trout and salmon, a net for whitefish, ropemaker's yarn and ammunition.

I also had my canvas tent ten ells long, two woolen blankets enclosed in a sac of oiled canvas, two hatchets, and several bags of dried food which I planned to cache for use on the return journey.

This food consisted of pemmican, dried meat, caribou tongues, lard, a little flour, some sugar, rice and tea.

We left Good Hope in glorious weather with a soft southeasterly breeze. It enabled us to raise a small sail which pushed us softly past the long Manitou Islands, covered with great black spruce, which here divide the giant river of the north for five long leagues.

A white flag with a red cross fluttered from the rear of my canoe which moved to the happy and harmonious refrains of my concertina. This was the first time I descended the majestic Naotcha Kotcho downstream from Good Hope, so I felt very happy.

To the left the Rampart-like rocks of the Unkkaye-Kfwe, vast layers of sandstone and phonolite [There is none here; Petitot probably saw limestone] ran for several leagues, forming the most attractive backdrop to some little crater-like lakes.

To the right were talus slopes cut by numerous affluents, most of them with little cascades. Others were noble water courses as large as the Seine. I will forbear from citing their barbarous native names to the reader.

Suddenly great limestone rocks arranged in wide strata above a sandy hill and covered on top with black spruce raised themselves before us. Were it not for the conifers which waved majestically in the evening breeze, one would have taken the whole for the ramparts of a great city.

This is the first headland, Eta-tcho-kfwere, the very name of which indicates that the Indians who named it came from the north.

What surprises the geologist is that these limestone strata rest on a base of earth which shows no stratification. They are formed in effect by alluvial mud deposits and yellowish sand. This sort of

terrain is called, following the American professor Dana, Devonian, and its rocks enclose a profusion of fossil bivalves of the genera *atrypa*, *spinifer* and *cyrtia* which the rains and the river floods wash and expose daily. These fossils are in their place here. In Europe they would be considered out of place. The shores are scattered with them.

At eight that evening we went ashore below the rampart on a pleasant shore covered with alpine heather and bearberry, those refreshing red berries which are the same as those found in Siberia.

This was the site of a hideous scene of cannibalism in 1842 or 1845; as I've told the story in "France illustrée" of August 1866 I will not repeat it here.

At ten, after a frugal meal, we re-embarked on the Mackenzie, which here was six kilometres wide.

At this season the sun does not set at this latitude (67°N), it is as bright at ten at night as it is at six o'clock in Europe and by a coincidence, perhaps explained by the nature of the air, which remains unchanged, one does not feel sleepy. A daytime feeling continues to penetrate the senses with joy and an inexplicable sense of well being. It seems like a weak anticipation of eternal life or immortality. We dressed our sail and let our canoe drift at the will of the breeze on this beautiful blue lake which flowed towards the sea.

To the right and left we saw low mountains, foothills of the Rockies, called the "Beaver's road" and "Trout Mountain."

Next day we passed the site of old Fort Good Hope. It stood on a point of land which was too low for the periodic high water levels of the river and was flooded out in 1836. It was then rebuilt on its present site.

Opposite this place other limestone rocks were cut by layers of phonolite which showed traces of former fire. Sulfates of iron and magnesium glittered across from these strata. There is also sodium carbonate. In other places deposits of oily iron formed streaks which seemed to sweat.

An old man named Tchana-Zele, or Old Baldy, long ago discovered these iron deposits at the same time as he discovered the Mackenzie, for the Hare Indians formerly lived on the west slope of the Rockies.

The banks of the Nakotchro-ondjig, as the Loucheux call the Mackenzie, are severe and sad. Nothing here recalls the smiling woods of the Athabasca or the Clearwater River. The alluvial shores of sand and rounded pebbles which form the most recent bed of the river support only meagre spruce, tufts of *Eleagnus argentea*, a plant like our grey purslane, absinthe, wormwood and the false copaiva.

These river-side slopes which continue at the same height for leagues are interrupted at regular intervals by deep gullies which resemble the tracks of immense cannon balls. This is why Franklin in 1825 called this area Cannonshot Reach. This stretch of the river receives several affluents, among them the Travaillant River. At its end we passed the second ramparts of the Mackenzie which Franklin called the Narrows.

It is a constriction formed by the Naotcha [Mackenzie] before it divides into its distributaries. It is bordered by cliffs 60 metres high, which like those at Good Hope, are called ramparts. The river here is 16 metres deep and flows at a speed of 11 km per hour.

The narrows form a natural limit south of which the Eskimos do not pass. Only once did they do so in order to massacre a party of forty Loucheux who were camped on the confluent Schital-Kreng. It is to these Narrows and not those of the Fort Good Hope ramparts, as Dr. Richardson says, that the Eskimos used to come to find flat stones from which they made knives and harpoon points. These stones are black, sonorous when struck, and they split like slate.

The Loucheux call these ramparts of the Narrows Krezjia-Konhen; the Eskimos Kreyrotchouk.

In the second third of the Narrows the Mackenzie receives an important tributary, the Tsi-kka-tchig or white earth river which the Canadians have erroneously called the [Arctic] Red River. It is the Kradziak of the Eskimos and Tale-Niline of the Hareskins. It runs from a valley in the Rockies and has its source on the 64th parallel.

The Loucheux of the Mackenzie and Anderson gather twice a year at its mouth to trade at Fort MacPherson or directly with the Eskimos. I found many of my friends from the upper Anderson here but only stayed long enough to shake hands with them, then I continued in haste for Fort MacPherson.

From the mouth of the Arctic Red River one can see for about 12 or 13 km, i.e. just to the outlet of the Mackenzie from the Narrows into its estuary which the Indians call the division of the currents (Sa-tra-welin).

At Point Separation, formerly well known as a result of the voyages of Franklin, Richardson, Back and Pullen, I made a cache of things for my return such as shoes, matches, tinder, fish lines and ammunition. I enclosed these things in a rubber bag which I hung from a spruce.

The security of our return depended on its contents remaining intact. Some hours later we found ourselves in the immense Mackenzie delta which measures 142 km from Point Separation to the sea and in

width from the Caribou Mountains to the east to the foot of the Rockies in the west, at least 60 km. The Loucheux name the delta portion of the river Nakotchro-tchig, while the upper part of the river is called Nakotchro-ondjig [not to be confused with the Nakotchro-ttsigae, which is the Yukon River or Kouik-pak]. At the head of the delta the river divides into four main channels, each of which divides forming a multitude of channels and small elongated lakes. The exceptional runoff that spring had raised water levels so much that the delta had disappeared under an immense but shallow layer of water, which at the horizon through its vapours merged with the sky so that the mountains to the west could barely be distinguished. The illusion that this was the sea was complete.

I was deceived myself for a moment. No land was visible to enable us to detect the banks of the four channels. What we saw was something like an earlier appearance of the mouth of the river before it had deposited the black soils which form the delta. No doubt in future new islands will continually form due to alluvial deposition, for the Eskimos have assured me that for over a kilometre offshore the water is only ankle or at most knee deep and is only deep enough for their light umiaks further out.

Point Separation is at latitude  $67^{\circ}49'N$ , the main branch ends at Ellice Island on latitude  $69^{\circ}14'$ . From Great Slave Lake to this island the Mackenzie measures no less than 1,149 km but measured from the source of its waters in the Rockies the Athabasca-Slave River-Mackenzie is about 2,870 km long and drains a vast area. The west channel, the largest, is called the Illouveartor or Kour-vik, Great River, by the Eskimos. They call the east channel the Nalron and the two central channels Kiglarve-kourk and Kiglarve-toupalouk.

But I repeat, at our entry into the delta, none of this was visible. We knew that the Peel River flows into the west channel but that channel was not visible. The only way we could hope to find it was to hug the west bank of the troubled flood waters. As in the biblical flood, the waters swirled in an insensible current. Trees were submerged above their main branches and islands had vanished under immense piles of ice.

"We've hurried too much," I said to my young men. "What shall we do now? How shall we discover the mouth of the Peel amidst all these obstructions?" As the evening advanced the great channel became so obstructed by drift ice that we could not proceed. A little before midnight the ice still adhering to the shore, detached perhaps by a rise of the water level, broke off with a noise of thunder, fell into the water and floated away. These miniature icebergs surrounded us so closely that I feared they might crush our frail craft. We fended them off with our paddles and advanced among them slowly for fear of one of their sharp edges tearing the bark of the canoe.

Finally there came a moment when blocks of ice fell with such frequency, such a great noise and causing such waves, that we thought we must find a secure spot and there wait until the sun started, by partial melting, to increase the adherence of the shore ice floes. But where was there such a spot? It was a serious matter. One could see nothing but huge ice floes of all shapes and sizes massed together, some balanced on others or supported above the water between adjacent floes. The ground was far away beneath the water and crushed under the weight of the ice.

Where could we light a fire at which to dry ourselves or find a patch of firm ground to keep our feet out of the damp and cold?

We still tried to proceed when moving, roaring masses, activated by a rapid current suddenly barred our way completely. What to do?

Noticing a sort of bay which I later recognized as the mouth of the Double River, we pushed the canoe onto a flat ice floe which we judged was at least partly aground.

The shore here is not clear and dry until July. The delta is sedimentary and the shoreline was so disturbed by the waters that it was no more than mire several feet deep.

The ice floes which rested on this terrain had cut and crushed the willows and other shrubs. We had to resign ourselves to staying on the ice at the risk of seeing our floe precipitate itself into the waves and float off carrying us with it.

We cut many willow branches and made thick beds on our desert island of ice and like new Robinson Crusoes awaited sleep, of which we stood in great need, on these improvised beds.

I've said it was midnight and though the midnight sun was not new to me it has never impressed me so much as that day. In these latitudes the sun at midnight does not, as at Good Hope, graze the horizon. It remains several degrees above it. It does not assume that red or violaceous tint which resembles the swollen face of a drowned person. The blue of the sky now became pale green. It did not darken and yet the light thrown by the sun on the Rockies had the colours of evening.

Suddenly, as by a secret enchantment, this reddish light on the mountains becomes golden. The mountains stood out more sharply as if in an instant a veil had been removed between them and the beholder, revealing their crests glistening with snow and showing their rugged slopes.

It was not evening now but early morning and the change had been instantaneous.

While my young savages slept under this, scarcely warming, renewed sun, I opened my mind to reveries which made me conscious of my singular position. I thought of the calm limpid azure waves of the Mediterranean which turned and seemed to look at one as with blind eyes and whose fascination attracts one. I compared them with the turbulent, muddy ice-bearing waves which flowed towards the pole carrying morsels of forest, fragments of islands and rolling along the bottom large stones which made a noise like the hissing and humming of a boiler.

Had I indeed come from the blue sea which washes the scented shores of Provence and Italy to find myself here alone, isolated, lost on the rim of these inhospitable desert shores which had made the reputation of Mackenzie, Franklin and Back?

Their adventurous voyages took place on these Arctic shores and their explorations, the accounts of which were the delight of my childhood, though they left exact memories, would now be something I could experience and take part in as well. What am I saying? I would renew them, though on a smaller scale but with plenty of initiative and without fear of danger.

Alexander Mackenzie, an officer of the Northwest Company, was the first to descend the river now named after him, in 1789, as far as the place where I now found myself. From here he took the east central channel, the Kiglarve-toupalouk, and reached the Arctic Ocean in August. Six years later in 1795 the unfortunate Livingstone, another officer of the same Franco-Scottish company, also tried to reach the ocean to make contact with the Eskimos. He camped at the end of Cannonshot Reach, took the east central channel and was massacred with his entire party on McGillivray Island.

In 1825 the British naval captain Franklin took the east channel or Nalron with his French Metis interpreter, Baptiste Boucher, and reached the sea with two open boats. He was robbed and pillaged by the Eskimos at Point Encounter and only saved his life and that of his people by a discharge of firearms. These were unknown to the Arctic pirates and terrified them.

Next year he followed the coast westward from the mouth of the Mackenzie and his explorations went as far as Point Return.

Later in 1848 and 1852, Captain Pullen and Lieutenant Hooper undertook the same expedition by another route, that is to say, they entered the Arctic Ocean through Behring Straits and left it by the Mackenzie, or rather by one of the mouths of the Peel River which they followed as far as Fort MacPherson, against the advice of their French guide, Jerome Saint Georges de Laporte. Only at the fort did they realize their mistake and redescended the Peel into the Mackenzie, which they followed upstream.

Franklin had already made the same mistake in 1826 and English maps still do not show a coastal mouth of the Peel. [There is none; the Peel drains into the Husky Channel and West Channel of the Mackenzie Delta.]

1850 saw the last Arctic expedition in the Mackenzie district, that of Doctor John Rae who travelled in search of the remains of Sir John Franklin's last expedition. His guide was the Frenchman [probably meaning Franco-Canadian Metis], Manuel, who, scared by the menacing looks of some Eskimos near Point Separation, received them with a discharge of his gun and wounded one of them. This rupture with the natives brought the expedition to an abortive end.

To come back to our camp: by ten o'clock the next morning the river ran much clearer. The sun's heat softened the surfaces of the ice so that they adhered to the shore or to other ice floes and stayed in place. We naturally profitted from this to continue our journey. We passed between a large western island called Krimertchivik and Ollane Island, the positions of which we could recognize by the floes massed on them forming a fortress of ice as it were. We passed through the mouth of the Peel, now as wide as the Seine and running fast, but which in summer is nearly dry, and finally found a fourth, wider mouth, where there were three spruce clipped of their branches, except those of the crown, as markers.

We had been told about these trees, which signal the proper channel to the Peel or Arveron (whale river). It should be recalled that my two Hare Indians were as much strangers to this country as I was myself.

These trees were long a secret of the Eskimos, who trimmed them to mark the entry or exit of each channel in the labyrinth of the delta. But white men, who put their noses into everything, soon nosed out this matter too. Every channel which has not at least one marker tree is a dead end, except during spring high water. The presence of several of these trees indicates a passage navigable at all seasons.

Twenty years ago the Eskimos massacred all the people of a Loucheux village near the Peel. Only a young boy escaped and made his way across the bush to Fort MacPherson.

At noon we entered the Arverovalouk-tchinia (the arm of the great whale river) which after a dozen turns brought us into the Peel proper which Franklin (after the French Metis) discovered in August, 1826.

He named the river after Sir Robert Peel, now the British Prime Minister, but the name Riviere Plumée [feathered or plumed river] which this noble river had already received from my Canadian compatriots, prevails even among the officers of the Hudson Bay Company [But this older name is now forgotten]. Among people in the Mackenzie district, none but a few learned individuals know the name Peel River.



When Franklin, thinking he was on the Mackenzie, ascended the Peel and finally perceived his error, he did not believe, again erroneously, that it was a great water course which Baptiste Boucher assured him would lead him in six days to the Pacific Ocean. [Petitot must mean that the guide told Franklin that the Peel would lead him over a watershed to a great water course, the Yukon, on which in six days he could reach the Pacific]. He doubted his guide's knowledge and inserted a second error in his maps.

Why did he not believe the good Metis? He would have discovered the gigantic Yukon River in Alaska and this would, ahead of Captain Pullen, have enabled him to traverse all the bounds of Northwestern North America.

The course of the Peel is thus shown erroneously on Sir John Franklin's maps. Its source is not west of the chain of the Peel Mountains but between that chain and the Tdha-tsen or dirty mountains which lie east of the latter. Its most southern source lies on latitude 64°N.

The Peel is a fine large river, second in importance among the tributaries of the Mackenzie after it leaves Great Slave Lake. Its mouths are as multiple as those of the Mackenzie. They mix so with the latter that the current of the water in parts of the delta periodically changes direction. Its most western mouth enters the ocean; the others open into the channels of the Mackenzie delta.

The union of these great water courses makes the hydrography of the region very complex. I sought on this journey to grasp the chaos of channels, but to make an exact map of this double delta a special expedition would be necessary. It would be in great danger from the Eskimos and I doubt that one summer would be long enough for the work to be accomplished.

Nothing is less interesting than navigation in the common estuary of these two rivers. There are no proper shores, only bluffs of black mud with no pebbles, which, with their vegetation, are ever sliding down into the water. Low points, even if they seem covered with grass, cannot be trusted. One's foot will sink in a viscous black ooze and one is liable to be interred alive in this muck. One cannot step ashore or tie the boat to anything on shore. In spite of a strong current we had to paddle and paddle, content to rest from time to time while clinging to some submerged tree. Every five minutes, detonating sounds crackled through the air. This, and the stirring of the waves, told us that another slab of forest on some strong point had been carried away by the flood. This gives rise to islands of vegetation on the river until their soil, washed out and dispersed, liberates their components into the current. Our greatest danger in these muddy waters was not to be engulfed in one of these frequent landslides, but to find our bark canoe pierced by hidden logs drifting submerged in the water and, lacking a piece of firm ground to step onto, to be able to save ourselves.

This is what almost happened to me in 1870. Fortunately, I was in the company of several Loucheux who took my passengers and myself into their boats and saved my baggage too. My canoe, holed by a great snag hidden under water, foundered in the batting of an eyelid.

Once we were on the Peel proper, we had some fine views of the Rocky Mountains which in this area are called the Richardson Mountains. It seemed to me they were not over 2000 metres higher than the river but I could be mistaken just as Franklin was mistaken in his estimate of their distance from the river. He thought they were 11 and they are actually 45 km away.

On Saturday, June 13th, we finally reached Fort MacPherson without having met a single Eskimo on the way and after having travelled 468 km by water from Good Hope and 1021 from Great Bear Lake where I had spent the winter.

## CHAPTER II. THE PEEL RIVER ESKIMOS

Fort MacPherson. — Xiet. — Arrival of the Eskimos. — My new friends. — Licentiousness of the Inuit women. — Excessive excitability of the Eskimos. — Intolerance of a Presbyterian. — The law of retaliation. — Superstitions.

Fort MacPherson lies 30 leagues from the Mackenzie and 130 from Fort Good Hope. It stands on a plateau, the river-side cliff of which slides and crumbles into the river every year, in a terrain so marshy that the buildings are always sinking. The redoubtable Fort was built, I believe, in 1848, by Mr. Bell, a Hudson Bay Company officer.

Though it appears as a town of the third order of magnitude on English maps, MacPherson is no more than a half-crumbling square pallisade, each side of which is about 100 metres long. There are some decaying logs in the pallisade through the loopholes of which no gun has ever passed; there is also a blockhouse, merely for decoration, for one cannot even get up into it.

Four log houses one storey high are placed along three sides of the quadrilateral leaving the front open as a courtyard. Facing the entrance of the square is the trader's house, who in this case is not a factor but merely the head of the post. Behind each house, which consists only of two rooms and a porch, is a kitchen. In addition, there are storehouses and the houses of the company servants, tall blond Orkney men. That, reader, is all there is to Fort MacPherson which you will find on your maps at  $67^{\circ}20'$  north latitude and  $136^{\circ}35'$  west of Paris. In the wall of the storehouse there is a casement which protects a shuttered little window of the kind seen in the cells of madhouses.

The trader sits behind this window to receive and count the furs of the fierce Eskimos, with a loaded revolver to each side of him on his desk. Through this window the savages receive from hand to hand forthwith the value of their furs in goods without ever being admitted into the store for fear that their greed for good and attractive articles should carry these communists to appropriate all its contents.

Every evening the Eskimos are politely conducted outside the pallisade and the blockhouse doors are closed and bolted carefully by old Baptiste Boucher, formerly post interpreter, now guide, factotum, and man of confidence at MacPherson.

At the time the chief of the post was a tall, reserved and solemn Orkney man whom the Loucheux called Xiet. He was, moreover, a very honest man and the father of a very numerous family. He was a conscientious trader, devoted to the Company body and soul. In its service he had risen from a simple fisherman to become first a

carpenter and then to his present, more elevated position. But he was a man without culture or letters and zealous to intolerance for his religion, Presbyterianism.

As I had a letter of introduction from Mr. Hardisty, the Company's district chief, without which he would without any scruples have turned me away, he received me coldly without a smile. He merely told me that I was admitted to his table during my stay at the fort but that he could not accommodate me in his house for lack of space. He allowed me to set up my tent within the pallisade "in case you are afraid of the Eskimos."

That phrase made me smile for I know that he himself went in great fear of them and so I told him I preferred to stay on the meadows outside the fort near the Eskimos and the river. This caused him to utter an "indeed" of stupefaction.

The view from Fort MacPherson is rather limited; a low mountain or plateau, the Nakotchro-K'loundie, intercepts one's view of the Rockies, only the most northerly peaks of which are visible far off to the right of the fort, their bare silhouettes blending with the azure of the sky. To the left bare grey lichen-covered hills completely hide the Peel River from view.

While waiting for the Eskimos, which the extraordinary run-off of the exceptionally early spring had held back on the coast, I occupied myself with the Louch  ux Indians or Dindjie as they call themselves, of whom I will not speak in this book which is devoted exclusively to the Inuit.

At last on June 18th the Eskimos began to arrive and continued to do so during the following days until there were about 300 of them. As they arrived in their umiaks at the fort, they landed directly below the ochraceous earth cliff and levelled a small place for themselves on the narrow strip between the bluff and the water and there placed their tents side by side.

Within a few days this strip of shore was fully occupied. This is their custom. They never dare to camp up on the elevation where the fort stands, even less would they think of camping in the pleasant and healthful shade of the woods near some well of clear fresh water. Resembling in this the beaver, whom they, like the Celts, regard as their ancestor, the Eskimos never leave the vicinity of the water. If they had tails, they would no doubt sleep with them in the water in case of surprise, just like their mythological ancestor.

The first arrivals were my acquaintances of 1865, the chief Kouninan, a great man (innok-toyok) who had just succeeded his father, old Krouvalark, in the title of Katoun or chief of the western Eskimos. Next came Anhoutchinak and Inontakrark, my companions on the return journey from Liverpool Bay.

These good people remembered me very well and at once made a fuss over me. They told me that an American whaler had been taken by the ice within sight of Point Barrow, that it had wintered there and that they believed it would not be set free this summer because they said this would be a cold year.

According to them there is a regular alternation in the climate of successive years in this region, a hot summer always succeeding an unusually cold and rainy one during which the shore ice does not get time to melt or disperse over the sea.

Here is a phenomenon of which Arctic navigators are probably not aware. It explains why some sailors have found open water in the very places where others, in other years, have seen only immobile ice fields.

The Eskimo is not timid or taciturn like an Indian. He is confident, a prattler who enjoys telling what he knows, to show off his knowledge and to perorate like an orator, accompanying himself with pretentious gestures with a noble air which is natural or perhaps affected.

Like the Polynesians or the Plains Indian, Eskimos tend to choose among strangers a friend whom they call their double (*illoua-laralou*) and who reminds one of the umbra of the ancient Latins. This friendship, once recognized and sanctioned, becomes inviolable. It constitutes a sort of relationship between the two friends and links them in a form of communism.

I also met Noulloumallok's older brother, Kroanark, a man of great heart, good sense and full of humanity. I had the good luck to cure him of a foul ulcer on the lower lip with camphorated alcohol. He showed the most lively recognition of my efforts, called me his brother, and missed no opportunity to protect me, to take my part in disputes and to teach me his native language.

But this old man had a very wicked son called Tchianark. He was tall and lank, ill-formed so that he limped on both legs, like Miphiboseth,<sup>6</sup> horribly squint-eyed and his eyes were the most oblique I've ever seen in a person, eyes like those of a beast. It's well known that every animal has such eyes, even the dog, man's friend and the most frank of the animals, but that in the most deceitful animals such as the cats and snakes, this feature is most pronounced.

This is a feature which in man never deceives. A man with oblique eyes is false.

Though in 1865 they had presented themselves as chiefs, I could now see then that Inontakrark and Anhoutchinak were no more chiefs than I was myself. But they were, nevertheless, influential and honoured men. I resolved to befriend them.

Among the Eskimos who had come from the west, there was one with a mop of vivid red hair and a great beard of the same colour. His face was white and freckled. I learned that he originated from Naterovik on the Behring Sea, probably from the Russian post of Mikaelovski.

Another came from the Colville River in Alaska, a large water course which Captain McClure mistook for the Yukon. I was told he was called Avanemeork, but this designation seemed to me no more than a locative probably referring to the Colville River. He was a long-established Shaman, undersized and squat like a Basque or Breton, with a distrustful-looking face which inspired no attraction in the beholder.

An excellent Eskimo called Nakoyork, or the good, had promised he would come to look for me at MacPherson to guide me on the new journey I proposed to make to the Arctic Ocean. He did not turn up and stayed, so I heard, at Ikotsik (the elbow) at the tip of Halkett Island, the principal summer fishery of the Eskimos. But the good old man had sent me his son-in-law, Pabian-Krarayalok, nephew of the great chief Navikan-Pabian, and brother of that pretty Eskimo girl whom Mr. Gaudet had some time ago carried off for her to become the wife of the chief of the Fort Simpson trading post.

He was a tall, good-looking fellow of twenty-five, always merry and smiling, who promised me mountains and marvels if I would take confidence in him. He was pushing at an open door for I was only too eager to leave for the coast, and gave him my agreement right away.

Two days later he came to me, looking sad and with lowered head.

"The white chief has engaged me to go and visit my sister at the great fort of the Krablounet [white men]. I cannot lead you to the sea."

I recognized in this event an expression of Presbyterian fanaticism.

"But," Pabian went on, "here is a relative of mine in whom you can place every confidence, he is old Kroyonapa."

So saying, he presented a ferret-faced old man with a pinched mouth to me who looked like a real crafty knave. I disliked his looks so much that I decided immediately to refuse his help.

"I thank you my younger brother," I said to Pabian, "for your care for me. But as you have broken the word you gave, I too will consider myself free; I want to be free to leave from here with whom-ever I please."

They both withdrew somewhat abashed.

I was quite astonished to see Madame Aoularena No 4, the widow of the young chief Kranerktork, who had died on the Anderson River in November 1865, at MacPherson. Now she was with Anhoutchinak, who it seemed to me had two wives with the same name. But as soon as Pabian had decided to travel up-river to Fort Simpson, he reached an understanding with Anhoutchinak that he, Pabian, should have the woman. So, like a piece of merchandise which was traded or exchanged at will, she passed into the temporary possession of Pabian, who had left his wife with his father-in-law on the coast.

This odious and disgusting traffic in women is so common and accepted among the Eskimos that the women are neither surprised at it, nor do they complain about it. Perhaps they even benefit from it. In any case, they lose through it the sacred powers of maternity and remain as sterile and non-prolific as dry rotten wood. [How can these temporary liaisons possibly have made the women involved sterile? Petitot's only basis for this remark that I can conceive is that while on "holiday" from their husbands they used some primitive method of birth control, but the wife trading cannot possibly have made them sterile].

Eskimo women have some expressions, words and word endings which the men don't use. This to me is a further indication of an origin different from that of their husbands. This idea would also explain the dualism in the skin colour, facial type and character of the two sexes among the Eskimos. They are the first people I have met where the two sexes hate one another and are jealous of one another, distrust one another and cry down one another even in front of strangers and enemies.

Their moral behaviour is such that as soon as bedtime approaches, though the sun is still high above the horizon, I've seen their women and girls slip into the houses of the Company servants as well as into the round lodges of the Loucheux "to ask for tobacco." The young libertine will know at once what this tobacco trade entails.

During the first night of the arrival of the Eskimos I had hardly got into my sleeping roll a little after midnight when I was awakened by two young Venuses with a café au lait tint, who in the absence of my servants, who had gone to play cards, entered my tent. They made provocative gestures at me and demanded tobacco. I gave them a prompt dressing down and told them to leave. They went away with bursts of laughter.

I had not fallen asleep again when Madame Aoularena herself indiscreetly opened the tent flaps and slipped inside without asking permission. But she did not take my protests in the same light vein as the girls who had preceded her. She was an old acquaintance from the Anderson. She expected a little more affection from me. She told me in great indignation that I was a very wicked man and that I did not deserve to travel down the coast as I hated Eskimo beauties so much.

The poor thing saw no more wrong in what she was trying to do than that.

The Eskimos were very interested in my playing my American concertina, at the time a fairly new instrument, to them. As soon as they heard a chord or two they ran up to my tent in a crowd, made a circle around me, and beat the rhythm with their knives on the palm of the left hand.

One day I tried to sing the Requiem and accompanied myself on that instrument. I could see at once that they understood the funereal theme of the beautiful piece. It had a strange effect on them. They began to look gloomy and listened in silence and then began to whisper the word *ounin-hoyouark* (magic). After this they lowered their heads and looked at the ground. A conventional sign of discontent and disapprobation with them.

Then I intoned the *Dies irae*. The terrifying crashes and dolorous supplications of the sublime song put them out so much that they all ran away down to the last one; not one of them had the nerve to endure this inexpressible music. I had observed the same thing with the Hare Indians at Good Hope on other occasions.

I soon perceived that at MacPherson I did not have in the chief of the post a gentleman and a friend as Mr. MacFarlane had been to me three years earlier. I had made the mistake of treating the local man like an equal and a friend by telling him of my plan to follow the Eskimos to their homes. At first he showed incredulity and astonishment at this.

No one had ever been so foolhardy as to try to do that, he said. The Eskimos were the personification of wickedness and perfidy. He could not guarantee that some terrible misfortune would not befall me.

"But," I answered, "you've also said that the Eskimos are well behaved and timid, and that you've never had any trouble with them."

This is in fact the false compliment the Arctic navigators pay them.

"Yea, yea," he answered. "That's how they are here because I'm surrounded by Indian Company servants all armed with guns, knives and axes. But you can be sure it's quite different when one is with them on their home ground."

"Never mind," I told him, "my mind is made up. I shall follow these people to the coast."

The same day a fanatical and turbulent Loucheux named Venklesse, a cousin of the wife of the post manager, rounded the Eskimos up by the flagpole of the fort and tried to dissuade them from helping me



with my journey. I can't transcribe his discourse for I did not understand it well enough for that, but I understood very well what my old friend Kroanark said to him in reply.

"Man, what you said is not true, for my brother Noulloumallok has assured me he [Petitot] is good and that he loves us."

It can be imagined that I did not worry over the disloyal Indian's tale about me for I felt assured that if it was God's will that I should visit the Eskimos on the coast he would remove the obstacles in my way. Yet I could not forbear talking to the post manager about this scene at supper that evening.

"Sir," I said to him, "my fate is in your hands. You know the Eskimos, you know how suspicious they are, how readily they draw the knife. To tell the Loucheux, as happens often here, that the French fathers are the cause of epidemics, that they go among the savages to bring sickness to them or even death, is not of great consequence. The Indians know well enough what to believe about our intentions and how to rate these falsehoods. But to repeat this sort of thing to the Eskimos could have consequences which the Hudson Bay Company might later, in its own interests, regret."

The Orkney man remained silent; he had understood.

At MacPherson I also saw Terter, Mr. MacFarlane's former hunter, who had become the competitor and enemy of Chief Navikan. Up to this time Terter had remained a faithful emulator of the whites. Out of goodness of character and in order to resemble the whites in such matters he had spared two Eskimo brothers who had killed his brother. Terter was six feet tall, well built, with a sort of Germanic air and manner, rather reserved but not proud.

He was brought to my tent by my old acquaintance, Navikan, who was smiling and being obsequious much as he had been on the Anderson, the old fox.

The glory of this scoundrel is the tsaviratsiark [threat of his knife] he uses towards his subordinates. That is the whole secret of his ascendancy over the Eskimos. They will intone a hymn when he turns up his eyes for the last time. They would even have expedited him into the celestial hunting grounds but Navikan had five or six big sons, fathers of families, and a brother Tsapoutaytok, a sort of Francis I in physique and stature, who was no better than his elder, Henry IV [i.e. Navikan].

The custom of the vendetta or blood revenge is still honoured among the Eskimos as much as it is in Corsica. The immunity of a murderer is due only to his relatives. A lone individual, an orphan, is out of luck if he happens to kill someone. But if the murderer is eagerly supported by his kin he can allow himself to collect metaphorically speaking a few scalps without having to pay too dearly for them.

In trying to get to know the Eskimos at the fort I noticed the same habit I had already noticed among the northern Indians, that they would not pronounce their name in front of a stranger.

Is it bad manners in their eyes to name themselves? I don't think so, they are too proud for that. There must be some underlying superstition which I've not been able to discover [Many primitives believe that to give any part of themselves, e.g. a nail shaving, a hair or one's name to another gives that individual some degree of power over one's own person]. Probably it has no more basis than most because it is of the nature of superstition to have no reason or to be more or less irrational.

However this may be, it is most peculiar to see an Eskimo whose name one has asked turn to another and say, "Say illoualaralou, what is it I'm called?"

And the substitute then replies for the first, who will at the next question, perform the same service for him.

With these people, as among the Indians, a name is not always given by the parents, nor are the final names often used during childhood; most often names are given by the shamans, medicine men or magicians. It is done in a ceremony in which the shaman confers a name revealed to him in a dream. The anrekoit [shamans] make up bizarre and even meaningless words which they feign have very great importance for the future of the children to whom they give them as names. Of course this is not done without a reward.

The conferring of a name which accompanies baptism is therefore something which is quite to the taste and in accordance with the views of North American savages. It is one of numerous instances in which Christianity agrees with their persuasions or finds a faithful echo in their intelligence.

At MacPherson nearly all the men have their heads shaved much like monks. They call this tonsure krigork. I asked them why they did this and this is what Navikan replied:

"It is in order that the sun, our father of everything, in heating our skulls, shall also warm our brains which transmit the beneficial warmth to our hearts."

This is perhaps a touching explanation, but in my opinion it is less convincing when one considers the intense insolation on Arctic shores.

### CHAPTER III. ESKIMO CUSTOMS

A warrior's impudence. — A cheat caught in the act. — The farewell dance. — The old Eskimo woman. — The dance of the dead.

One morning a strange Eskimo in his forties and superbly dressed walked into my tent without a smile, with a haughty and imperious expression, nose in the air. He had false-looking eyes and was throwing about fierce glances. In short, he looked a real Robert the Devil.<sup>7</sup> He strode right in without a gesture of asking for permission and sat down beside me. Then, playing with his knife, with an air of indifference bordering on impertinence, he turned his square head surrounded by spikes of rust-coloured hair, like that of an angry hyena, at me and with affected contempt, looked me over from head to toe and back again. I was reading my breviary.

This man's manners displeased me. I closed my book but kept the index finger of my left hand in it, and I looked him over in the way he had practised on me, but without raising my eyebrows more than he had done.

He moved his head and drew back, as if to say, "A fig for you." At last he deigned to open his beak and, tapping his knife on my little locked handbag, said "Tchouva ouva?" ... "What's that?"

"Takouyaren tchouloutit - you can see, it's a bag."

He smiled with an air of mockery which seemed to say, "That's not what I asked," then he added, "Tchouva atan? - What's in it?"

"Tchouratsiark - my clothing."

"I want to see, open it!"

"No."

"What do you mean, 'no.' I tell you, I want to see those clothes."

"And I tell you, 'no.' Am I or am I not the master of my own handbag?"

"I'm a chief, people don't refuse me."

"And I, too, am a chief, and more of one than you. I am not one to be ordered about."

At this reply, I thought my visitor was about to seize me by the collar. His lips trembled in anger; his breathing became stertorous and foam and saliva began to appear at the corners of his mouth. But I did not budge. I sustained his look coldly without blinking an eye, without anger, but with the beginning of an irritation he must have

been able to read on my face. My man had become too infuriated to be able to speak. He kept tapping my handbag with the grip of his double-edged dagger, muttering impatiently, "Keata, keata - quickly, quickly!"

My only response was to open my breviary and, without taking further notice of him or his anger, I pointed to the way out with my finger, and continued to read my Psalms.

All his anger vanished; he left and I never saw him about my tent again. Had I given way he would have pilfered the contents of my bag or at least made interminable demands.

I'd noticed with annoyance that the Eskimos did not come to sit in my tent or in the entrance in any number, but to steal something. They looked attentive when I spoke to them - seemed to be all eyes and ears, while their hands, hidden behind their backs or under their legs, were on the prowl. Either they searched some sack, opened the hinges of my handbag with their fingernails, took the flint from my servant's gun, or stole some of his arrows which they had just sold to him a few moments before.

I only had to watch their faces to know what was going on for their falseness did not go so far as to allow them to dissimulate their game. In this they are inferior to the Indians. When they were up to their tricks, their eyes showed such roguery and they took on such a malicious expression I merely had to get up suddenly and seize the arm of the malefactor to catch him in the act of stealing.

In these cases they never became angry. They blushed like young girls, got up at once and took off with bursts of laughter. Only in this sort of circumstance have I seen Eskimos blush.

One day I was talking to a Loucheux woman in my tent, who was seated in front of some Eskimos, when I perceived, by the malice imprinted on the features of these Arctic blackguards, that they were about to play some trick on the poor creature. So I told her in her own language, "My daughter, don't you feel some hands working at your back?"

She turned around brusquely and surprised one of the young men with a handful of blue glass beads he had cut off her cloak. The thief reddened in shame all over and saw himself obliged to give back the beads, while the woman gave him a dressing down which covered him with confusion.

To be caught in flagrante delicto is the only misdeed which hurts an Eskimo and which he regrets.

Some other day, a young malicious-faced man - he could have been a Parisian street urchin of the worst sort, came into my tent at

noon, stretched himself out on the ground face down, and seemed about to go to sleep from lassitude and heat. I did not object to that. But lo, a few minutes later he feigned waking up and at once left the tent. By accident, my eyes fell on the gun of the little singer, one of my Hareskin servants, which was lying along the tent wall where the stranger had lain, and I noticed that its cock had been removed. Of course, I ran after the youth and took back the object, which was still in his hand.

Finally, on another occasion, it was a woman who came audaciously to steal of the little of my servants, from my tent. On pursuit, she had the effrontery to start yelling in protest as if I was robbing her. Perhaps she felt she had earned her booty by the success of her enterprise, for the moral code of these people is Spartan. The tears and cries with which she defended what she had stolen were so comical that I could not help bursting out laughing. My ill will vanished and I treated her like a willful, unknowing child, leaving her with the food she'd stolen.

This last episode gives us an initial idea of the education of Eskimo children. The children of the Dene Indians are free to act as they please; they are never punished. They have it over their mothers as soon as they can walk and talk, and dominate them as soon as they have killed a game animal. But, at least there is among them deep-down a goodness of heart, kindness, honesty and shame which are natural to them, which belong to the race and are inherited.

The Eskimo child is quite different. Having nothing but examples of piracy, murder, uncontrolled anger, brigandage, and revolting shamelessness in front of his eyes, he is as cynical as a little dog, for he has never been told off and because of the sedentary life of his family during the winter, and the enforced promiscuity of the sexes, he knows at a very early age what other children never learn in the family. He steals because his father steals, and because his mother has taught him the first steps of thieving as if it were a praiseworthy and heroic act.

This cynic is also strong-minded and a free thinker. He laughs at everything, mocks everything, confronts the whole world, fearing no one, commits evil deeds without fear and without remorse. But, there I was ahead of myself, for I've never seen an Eskimo die and I don't know whether in that terrible moment they are as calm and as gently resigned as the Christian Indians.

There are, however, exceptions among the Eskimos, as these pages show. It would be unfortunate if there were none, but they are rare. And even then, what a difference between even these exceptions and families of good people among the northern Indians.

As Kraroyalok had decided to go to Fort Simpson I chose two other guides and protectors in his place to conduct me to the coast. They

were Inontakrark and Anhoutchinak, my acquaintances from the Anderson who eagerly offered to help me.

Both of them considered themselves to be good men and that is what was said about them too. It was an excellent recommendation but I was soon to know what Eskimo goodness consisted of.

"The Inuit are not all alike," the second of my two friends told me. "They are not all good. As for me, when hunting I never miss an animal I'm after. I'm an excellent fisherman and my family has never had to go hungry. I've never stolen anything and I've never killed anyone. In a word, I'm a good man."

At these words I recognized the "honest man" of the political writer Proudhon, who has never killed nor stolen, who lives comfortably but within these limits, has done or may do anything else he pleases. This is the *nec plus ultra* of perfection of unbelievers and free thinkers.

During the last night we spent at MacPherson a great dance, the dance of farewell, was held. All the population of the fort assembled for it in front of the fort. Loucheux, Eskimos and white men all mingled and talked to one another in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and confidence. Nevertheless, I noticed that all the women and even the children were armed with a knife, a dagger or gun. That is characteristic of all Eskimo gatherings. Distrust is there, hidden beneath a gloss of politeness and general contentment.

I wanted to see how much confidence I inspired in them. So I took a very pretty dagger out of the hands of a young man of my age - I was then twenty-eight, to look it over. He let me have it without resistance but at once he passed his right hand over his boot and pulled out a second dagger from there. I took that one too without returning the first. My man let me have it but reaching under his parka produced another dagger and with an air of distrust put himself on guard.

Meanwhile the Eskimos had rolled some logs along and arranged them in a wide circle which the spectators occupied. Men, seated, took the first row, behind them the women stood. At the back of the circle were two great louts, each holding a hoop on which a skin was stretched. These were drums. They are not beaten on the skin but on the rim of the hoop, to and fro movements of the body imparting the rhythm to the instrument. The harmony produced is a bit like that one would obtain by beating two leg bones together or the rattles formerly used at certain nocturnal services.

No sooner had the drums begun to sound than a bawling was heard from the audience who were at the same time the musical chorus, the men in loud voices, the women in a squeaky falsetto, "Eh! yan yan yan yan he! Eh! yan yan yan!" That is their music - it has rhythm and cadence but no diversity. And to its beat the assembly started to sway, to leap

and to jump up and down as if transported by this macabre harmony while one or more dancers advanced into the open space and astonished the gathering by their evolutions, their extreme postures and their vehement gestures.

Inontakrark, who had a great reputation as a dancer, was the first to begin. He advanced into the circle, the shaggy fringe of his hood bristling about his head and his long knife in his hand to beat the rhythm. He danced gracefully, bounding up and down rhythmically while making peculiar gestures with his head, arms and torso. At times he suggested a bird preening itself, at others his movements resembled the bizarre contortions of a parrot in front of a mirror. And yet again I seemed to recognize the ridiculous poses and movements of a blackcock [The male of the Eurasian black grouse. A number of these birds display on a collective dancing ground or "lek" to which the hens come to be mated. There is no pair formation.], showing off in front of his hens.

When the rhythm of the drums changed he took on a severe and martial air. He was not a bird any more but a warrior defying an invisible enemy. He held his dagger, howled like the Arctic wolf - the battle cry of the Inuit; he pranced proudly, stamped furiously on the ground, leaped onto his invisible prey, tore it apart, crushed it and suddenly became gentle and gracious again as at the beginning of his dance.

His dance had character and was certainly not without merit.

Inontakrark was succeeded by a quartet of two young men and two matrons. The men were superbly dressed in black skins edged with furs of different colours. One had a headband of otter skin with an aigrette of crane feathers. From his loins dangled the thick tail of a black fox which made him look like some animal rearing up on its hind legs. The other had a raven tied to his back and an ermine skin tied over each shoulder. His head band was made from the skin of an Arctic loon with metallic blue feathers spotted with white. The bird's head with its long black beak was placed over the dancer's forehead. It reminded me of the crest of a helmet.

The two women in decorated skin coats with their immense feathered hoods waddled with an affected majestic air which looked supremely foolish. All their actions consisted of alternatively bending ever so slightly one knee on the other in the Cree manner, pursing their lips in an affected expression, nearly closing their oblique little eyes, and raising now one arm and then the other.

I don't know what these ridiculous gestures mean [They seem to be intended to express feminine coyness and modesty]. As to their two partners, they bounded around their ladies with the wild and unrestrained movements of the berserk, rolling their eyes and behaving altogether as if in a frenzy.

The disdain shown by the Loucheux spectators at this wild dance with its Polynesian character was obvious. They could hardly conceal their scorn and, pointing at the dancers, they told me, "Nachi kouttchin! What silly people!"

Nevertheless, these merciless critics did not fail to applaud out of politeness, shouting even more loudly than the others, "Anakranan! anakranan! Encore, encore!"

Suddenly the drums beat more slowly - an appeal for silence, then resumed on a more lively rhythm and a horrible little old woman, the mother of the great man Navikan, entered the circle affecting the vivacity of a young man.

She was dressed like a man for she had neither a woman's hood nor a touglit. Her wrinkled parchment-like face was decorated with a charcoal moustache and a little beard and she carried a warrior's knife.

She bounded about and grimaced, mimicking the men to perfection with vehement contortions, howling all the while like a wolf and twisting about like a wolverine.

The crowd was almost delirious with admiration. But the folly of old age aping the frolics of youth was too heart-breaking a spectacle for me - I could not even smile. I almost felt like weeping at such licentiousness in the frail old woman.

The last act of the performance, which would have been all the rage in Paris, was a medicine dance performed by Krarayalok and another young Eskimo. It was in honour of those who had died during the preceding winter.

As soon as the beat of the drums changed as the frightful old woman left, a Loucheux said to me, "This will turn out badly. They are going to dance for their dead. Their thoughts will become evil."

I took the apprehensions of this Christian with a grain of salt and wanted to see the performance to its end.

Krarayalok and his partner were launched into the ring with a cheerful rhythm. After some innocent, graceful poses, they suddenly seemed to remember what it was all about and changed their style.

Their faces, natural and smiling up to now, saddened. They stopped their wolf-like howling and fell silent, and fixed their eyes on the ground. It was an inexplicable transfiguration that had a horrible effect. These young men must internally be evoking the most lugubrious thoughts and forming the most sinister plans, for their exteriors to reflect it in such a vivid manner. Their dramatic interpretation of their feelings was admirable. Something diabolic



which exhaled hatred and the urge for vengeance mingled with profound grief and the blackest despair was displayed on their faces.

Several Loucheux could stand this sight of the two frightful-looking men no longer and walked away saying, "Tschizje, Anadren nizjin krwa! Really, the Eskimos are wicked people!"

As the dancers changed their expressions, so they changed the style of their dancing. Krarayalok bounded up and down in a demoniac manner, his arms loose, his eyes fixed on his chest. His leaps were as high as a metre and what was almost inconceivable - he fell back on the points of his feet and having trotted a few steps on his points like a ballet dancer he bounded sadly up and down in the middle of the circle playing the role of one recently dead. His partner played the role of the shaman who had called forth this soul.

The enthusiasm of the dancers and the Eskimo spectators was now at its height. The post manager and his people left in a hurry and closed the gates of the fort behind themselves and orders were given to make all preparations in case of an attack.

The Loucheux had already melted away one by one and shut themselves up in their tents where they always kept their guns loaded and their daggers handy.

It is when they are worked up at the end of their dances, particularly after the medicine dance or the dance of the dead, that the Eskimos get up to mischief.

I did not know this and stayed on alone among them to the very end. But nothing tragic happened. When the Inuit saw that they had no admirers left, they stopped their songs and dances and disappeared into their tents. It was now two in the morning.

Only the young men went on playing through the sunlit night, a sort of tennis, tossing one of them in a blanket, pole climbing and hop scotch. They did not go to sleep till five or six in the morning.

The Eskimos had spread the rumour that they wanted to seize Fort MacPherson and plunder its storehouses on the specious pretext that the whites had brought diseases hitherto unknown among them. They would have found the Loucheux firm friends and allies of the whites, allies who are not to be despised when gathered in a body and with a white man at their head.

It does sometimes happen that these Eskimo dances which, as we've seen, are really very innocent, don't pass off quite so decently. Some of the young women and girls, in order to please the men and to win their applause, suddenly drop an essential piece of their clothing to the jubilation and hilarity of the spectators.

But this does not happen at MacPherson anymore, for the present post manager, a very honest man, as I said, expressly forbade it. This is my proof that on their own ground, on their solitary coasts, the Eskimos are not so modest and decent in their games and dances.

#### CHAPTER IV. THE NIRO-KILOV-ALOUK - OR HUSKY CHANNEL

Departure for the Arctic Ocean. — A scuffle. — On the Peel. — The thief Navikan reappears. — Distrust of my hosts. — The river of spilt blood. — My protectors appear. — Meretricious advances. — An old whaler. — Eskimo tents. — Identification with the Celts. — The weather works against me.

At last the day of our departure arrived. I had been awaiting it impatiently. However, because of the "official" festivities of the night before, much of the day was devoted to sleep, so that I did not take my farewell of the Fort personnel until two in the afternoon.

From the post manager I received a 50 kg ball of dried meat, as well as 5 kg of lard to help us eat the dry, lean meat, and eight metres of corded tobacco so that I could pay the Eskimos for what they could supply me in the way of food.

My other provisions I had brought along from Good Hope, as already related.

I made the great mistake of leaving in my birch bark canoe with my two young Hareskin Indians, Jean Trou-Kweye and Jean Oulla-Yan. In such a case, when starting so important a journey and one that offered so many dangers, one should imitate Hannibal and Cortes and burn one's boats behind oneself.

The skin umiak of my protectors was already dancing on the river. The women had taken their places, their hands on the poles of their paddles, which looked rather like huge baker's shovels. Their white dogs, their legs tied, were lying beside the baggage while the children of the two families, three little girls of eight to ten, naked like silk worms, were swimming in the muddy water under the maternal eyes, only awaiting the signal of departure, ready to jump like grasshoppers into the skin boat.

Inontakrark and Anhoutchinak, themselves in their narrow, long and light skin kayaks, overtook the umiak. Then, double paddle in hand, they waited impatiently for me to come down the bank where I required all my rhetoric to persuade my servants to follow.

The two Hareskins pretended to be deaf, to have forgotten something; they came and went to and fro, showing a rather natural hesitation. My two Eskimos smiled.

No sooner had I taken my place with the two in my canoe than a woman's sharp cry rang out from the top of the bank. It was one of those heart-breaking cries which upset one from top to bottom, sounding like the cry for help of someone about to be murdered. It attracted a crowd of Indians and Eskimos and I watched the movements of the crowd.

I spotted a haughty-looking Eskimo (the same one with whom I'd had an altercation about my handbag), knife in hand, his features convulsed with rage and foaming at the mouth. He was trembling as he confronted the Loucheux Schaekutahyiw, who was similarly armed but in possession of himself.

Seeing them take one another's measure, knife in hand, my first movement was to jump ashore to prevent bloodshed and to appeal to the respective chiefs to clarify the dispute and bring it to an amiable end. I knew that such an appeal to their chiefs, saves face and also flatters the natives, while direct interference by a third party, white or Indian, would irritate them.

We learned that the two men had not started the conflict but that each was defending his wife, for their wives had taken hold of one another's hair and were rolling about, struggling in the grass a little way off, uttering the bone-chilling cries we had heard. It was all about a horn spoon the Eskimo woman had stolen from the Loucheux woman. Each had hold of one end of it, the one to reclaim her own, the other to affirm her conquest - or annexation. Why not, the other hand was clutching her opponent's hair. Unfortunately the Eskimo woman, like they all do, carried some false hair like a wig and this became the trophy of Schaekutahyiw's fat wife, to the utter confusion of her enemy but to the even greater hilarity of the Loucheux crowd, who, with levelled guns or knives at the ready, stood around the combatants.

The Eskimo woman, forced to give up the spoon to regain her wig, shouted with rage and shed hot tears. The shame of having been taken in an attempted theft was no doubt part of the cause of her tears.

The Loucheux woman, a real mastadon in size and proportions, triumphant, had one knee on the thief's belly and held up her spoon yelling that it was her own, which the Loucheux chief and those of his people present confirmed.

As to the Eskimo woman, clumsy enough to have been caught in her thievery and inferior in the struggle, they hooted at her and she disappeared into her tent as quickly as possible.

Seeing the state of affairs and profiting by the hesitation of the husbands, I took their knives and threw them on the ground and trod on them. Then I forced them to shake hands and to drop all hatred for neither of them had wronged the other.

This task accomplished, I returned to the shore, ordering the Loucheux to disperse. They did so at once, though under protest, for they too are almost as thievish and quarrelsome as the Inuit.

But when I looked at the Eskimo and the look of hatred he gave me I could see that it would take more than a handcuff to calm the rage of a man of that stamp and character.

My two Jeans, the tall and the short one, were even less happy about our departure now than before this incident, but it was too late for them to retreat. I sat in the middle of the canoe while they paddled and we were escorted by the two Eskimo kayaks. I struck up the French national anthem of the [2nd] empire, "Partant pour la Syrie," while the families' umiaks luffed about over the river from side to side as one might expect of a boat without rudder or steering oar propelled by women.

It was fine that afternoon of the 22nd of June, 1868. The sun cast a reddish glow over the Peel; it made it shine like an Archimedian mirror and it also produced an intense heat. In fact it was extremely hot for there was not the slightest breeze. We passed along shores corroded and scraped by the ice floes until we came to the first bifurcation of the river. Then, instead of taking the right-hand one by which we had come from the Mackenzie, we took the western channel which runs along the foot of the Richardson Mountains. The Eskimos call it Niro-kilov-alouk [the Husky Channel] while the Loucheux have translated it as Nan-ttsen-nilen, or the current which flows along the land. The English call it the Husky or Eskimo River; it is the main channel [i.e. distributary] of the Peel, the one which leads to the Arctic Ocean [actually it leads to the west channel of the Mackenzie delta].

As I was leaving MacPherson I had been vividly acclaimed by all the Loucheux population - pagans, Protestants and Catholics. My determination in settling the quarrel was enthusiastically appreciated - it was considered a brave deed which would have good effects on religion, the understanding between the two races and the pacification of the Inuit.

I did not have to wait long to experience the bad faith of these Neocarthaginians. No sooner had we entered the Husky Channel than my canoe was suddenly surrounded by several kayaks manouevered by Eskimos among whom I recognized the old chief Navikan and his three sons Oalik, Pabiana and Krimeona. How could they have got here ahead of us, for I had spoken to Navikan at the time of the quarrel involving Schaekutahiyw? What were they up to now, barring my way so far from the Fort and all protection? Did Navikan still remember how I had told him off at Fort Anderson three years earlier and was he seeking vengeance now? Or was he just going to test my courage? All these thoughts flashed through my mind in an instant.

Well, the old chief and his sons all clung onto the gunwale of my canoe with grins which their small bright eyes and their perforated [for the labrets] drivelling cheeks made hideous. Navikan said something to Inontakrark of which I could understand this much - "I'd like to take something from him."

The reader already knows that by their Spartan code, theft is a form of prowess and is sanctioned.

"Mitchi Pitchitork" he said, "Mr. Petitot."

"Tchouva, tchouva? Well what?" I replied.

"Give me some tobacco or I'll take your cooking pots. I'm the chief, I am."

"I've no tobacco to give you and as for the pots, they're essential for my journey to the sea."

At this he raised the oiled canvas with which I'd carefully covered my belongings and on which all three of us were sitting and yelled, "The cooking pots. Where are they? I need them."

I felt like laughing at the fellow, the noble chief, the great man who merely wanted some cooking utensils. But I was not going to satisfy him.

Had my hosts not interposed and told Navikan I was under their protection and that I'd promised them a reward for this, he would certainly, once he'd worked himself into a rage, have robbed me.

At their explanation his bad temper changed to smiles. He gave us his hand and said, "Anakranan, we'll meet on the coast," and left with his three satellites. We had emerged from the affair with honour.

But I had yet to pass another test. As soon as the four rascals were out of sight Inontakrark approached my canoe stealthily and now he hung onto the gunwale while Anhoutchinak did the same on the other side and they started to rummage through my pockets with an effrontery, or was it naivety, which disconcerted me.

My protests were in vain; they carried on their search nonetheless.

"Aren't you armed?" the first of my protectors asked.

"Armed? What for?" I answered. "Do you think me capable of killing one of my fellow men?"

I had thought it wise to rid myself of my hunting rifle. We had only kept one gun, Oulla-Yan's, and he had hidden it so well in the bottom of the canoe that my hosts never noticed it.

"However," I said laughing, "I do have a kind of weapon on me," and I pulled out the little pocket knife I used for eating and to sharpen my pencils.

"Who would believe it?" the Eskimo called out in admiration. "You don't even have a pitiktsi-arark? (a revolver). Oh! your heart is good! Krayanayne - great thanks."

Anhoutchinak then showed me a small wooded islet which borders a natural cross channel between the two main arms of the Peel.

"You see that island, Kratetsy. Well the Loucheux once surprised and killed many, many Inuit there. That's why, you see, we hate one another and yet it wasn't always like that."

"How then did you break with them?"

"Well, at first we lived in peace with the Irkreleit [Indians]. We even used to hunt in the mountains with them in the summer. But one day a Loucheux decided to kill our strong medicine, our totem the raven, to rob him of his arrows [of his feathers to use for arrow making?]. Well I ask you, is that a pardonable crime? So one of us killed the Loucheux and was killed in his turn by another of them. So the blood feud continued, transmitted from one family to another until our own time."

In the afternoon we passed a second western channel, the Aourekouyoub-kraymalima, or river of bloodshed, then a third, then suddenly, reaching a rounded bay created by the current, we disembarked by a temporary camp, where our hosts were expected that evening.

The camp consisted of six caribou skin tents, hair on the outside and with no opening save the entrance which was covered by a flap of skin. The tents stood in a row on a dry piece of shore covered with horse tails. At the water's edge there were eight umiaks and fifteen kayaks from which I could tell how many hunters there were, namely including my two hosts, seventeen.

I found here several faces I recognized, even if not exactly those of friends; old Kroanark, Noulloumallok's brother, the man with the ulcer, Kouninane and his older brother Oupik, the snowy owl, chief of the western Eskimos. There was Tchiatsiark, my companion on the Anderson in 1865, Toulerktsen, a handsome young man of aimable bearing, and Tsapoutaytok, powerless and always surly, Mimirnak, Anhoutchinak's brother-in-law, a man with a brutal-looking face, the shaman Avanemeork from the Colville river and seven tall young men between eighteen and twenty-eight already married to young girls of about twelve and of course some children, fifteen to twenty of them, up to thirteen years old. As soon as this crowd came into view, Inontakrark began to shout at the top of his voice, "Look, you others, know that the prayer chief and his two Irkreleit (Indians, literally louse nits) are under our protection, mine and Anhoutchinak's. We ask you to respect them as befits worthy hosts."

Then he told me not to unload my boat till their [his and Anhoutchinak's] tent was raised and fitted out. I did not want to camp so early, only five or six hours after noon. I told this to my protectors.

"When I travel," I said, "I let my canoe drift on all night after we've had our supper. I want to carry on to the coast. I'm in a hurry to get there and I'll wait for you at the village there."

Inontakrark grinned into his little beard at this, the other one showed some humour.

"So you want to get robbed or get yourself killed?" he said. "Look at those fellows and listen."

And indeed I could hear the young men of the band burst out laughing and I saw them rubbing their hands in anticipation at hearing my intentions, which would have removed me and my two aides from the protection of my good hosts and left us at the mercy of the young thugs.

So I had to give up a plan I much preferred in preference to travelling in short daily stages with the Eskimos, and it was decided I would never separate myself from my protectors.

Leaving my boat and its contents guarded by my two Jeans, who were happy to keep one foot on shore and one in the boat in case of a scuffle, I went to visit all the tents and to help furnish our own.

But already a tall, good-looking girl of twenty-three to twenty-five accosted me with her most charming smile.

"Noullakre tchouitor," she said to me. "Chief, I've no husband. You will give me some tobacco, won't you?"

Her intentions were natural and even kind. So she was greatly surprised to hear my positive refusal to have any dealings with any woman or girl whatsoever. I must have seemed quite beyond understanding to these sybaritic people.

As I went on I found all the older people smiling and affable, the women just as affable as the men but a little fearful, almost distrusting. As to the younger folk, they were like the worst sort of blackguards are just about anywhere, devoted from an early age to every kind of shamelessness and all the vices. They laughed, sneered and mocked, but they did it quite gracefully. Of course they did not know me as yet.

Kroanark was the first to invite me to his tent in his loud cavernous voice which is typical of the older Eskimo men - a fisherman's or sailor's voice, that of one accustomed to hailing across fogs and storms, dominating the sighing of the wind and the noise of the waves. He asked me to share his supper of boiled fish. I accepted at once and he thanked me for this with repeated "Krayanayne."

This white-haired old man had three crosses tattooed on his right shoulder and four on his left. It made one think of two little



calvaries. Imagining that these were Christian or at least religious emblems, I asked him about them.

"These," he said, "are glorious marks. They commemorate whales that I killed and brought ashore on the coast. These signs are called tsavark."

While telling me this, the good old man looked as radiant as if he had been telling me of trophies taken from the enemy.

The sight of these tattooed crosses reminded me at once of the words of a prophet, which have been applied to Our Lord, "He shall carry the sign of his glory on his shoulder."

I admit the reference of this prophecy to Jesus Christ who carried on his shoulder the cross, which has raised him all over the world; but for the words to have made sense in the time of Ezekiel, who I believe proffered them, must there not in his time have been some practical analogies to that I was seeing here among the Eskimos? If so did the custom originate in western Asia?

However that may be, Kroanark in his fifty years as a hunter had only killed seven whales and he was the only one in this tribe who carried the glorious tsavark tattoos. This may give some idea how few of the cetaceans the Arctic Ocean supports. In fact, many of the young men present said they had never seen one and they were astonished to hear my description. They had never seen a walrus either, though by barter with tribes to the east or west they received whale bone and walrus ivory.

Next I amused myself by watching the tent that was to receive me going up. The wives of my hosts each seized a hoe made of whale bone and levelled a suitable spot, picking up bits of wood, cutting the little willows and beating the ground. Then they covered it with a floor of cudgels laid side by side through which moisture could run away and which protected the bear and seal skins which they placed on them, from the moisture of the ground.

Then they fetched a bundle of long straight, well-polished poles (kranait) which were joined at the top like the spokes of an umbrella. They opened this frame spacing the poles regularly all around the floor they had laid and covered it with caribou skins sewed together into a single large conical envelope which they placed hair to the outside.

The result was, of course, a conical tent (touperk) which had a little opening two feet high at the bottom. Then they laid furs (kraa) on the floor and over these fine skins softened by chewing (oulit) and the home was ready.

When the tent was ready my hosts set out their fish hooks nearby and on their return invited me to have boiled fish with them. I

accepted. By eating with them I demonstrated in effect that I had no evil intentions toward them and feared none from them. This at least is the meaning the Eskimos give to the law of hospitality. By accepting what I offered them to eat they were obliged on their parts to become my allies. That is why I had brought the dried meat and lard with me and I gave some of it to both of them in return for the fish.

These good fellows explained to me that while in their tent I was inviolable in the eyes of their people, for hospitality made me sacred or taboo. The contents of my canoe were equally so as long as the canoe was afloat among their moored boats. But if I were separated from them, if I'd set up my tent on its own and placed my baggage in it, this would put me beyond the protective powers of the taboo and the young men would have robbed me.

In the eyes of these people a boat which touches the shore where they are becomes theirs. Is this a similar law to that invoked by the ancient Celts of Ireland, Britain and Brittany who used to try to draw ships onto the rocks of their coasts by false signals so that they should get wrecked and become their prey?

It had been calm when we left MacPherson. Two hours after we'd left, Pihangnark, the southeast wind had arisen and had enabled us to use our sail.

As night fell the Eskimos asked me to pray for the southeast wind to stop for it was very cold and could only be unfavourable to them.

"Call Kanhoungnark, the northeast wind" they said, trying to arouse my sympathy. "If you don't we won't catch any fish and we won't kill any moose for the southeast wind will carry our odour to them and they'll hear our voices; call up Kanhoungnark."

I assured them that I would pray to God for what they desired to happen, but that I claimed no power over the elements and that no man on earth had such power.

They were not convinced of the truth of that assertion.

About ten at night the south wind became strong enough to worry the Inuit, though I did not realize it. I soon received several visitors, among them Oupik (the owl), the chief. He did what he could to seem amiable but it was a constraint and embarrassment. He was jealous that I'd not chosen him, the chief, as my protector.

He accepted a morsel of meat I offered him but he must have made objections to my presence among the people and to my journey to the coast to my hosts, for I heard the latter reply as Kroanark had replied to the Loucheux Venklesse.

"What you think is not true. I tell you this man is good and he loves us."

He said this in a honeyed caressing voice in tones so wheedling I had to smile. One could see he wanted to soften the chief.

But Oupik remained worried for he said on leaving, "Ke, Ke, outcherktouark tsillariktsidzoun! Quick, quick, get us some calm!"

Alas I could see that the power over the elements they attributed to me would be in frequent demand and that in spite of myself, little though I cared for it, I would have to play the role of magician.

Some women now came in and asked one of my hosts what my aim was in coming among them. Fooling them, he said:

"No doubt to give you tobacco."

This plunged them into an outburst of laughter.

I passed the night in the Eskimo tent, my two Jeans slept in our canoe safely moored between my host's two umiaks.

## CHAPTER V. ON THE NIRO-TOUNAR-LOUK (THE WEST CHANNEL)

Influenza among the Eskimos. — Picturesque aspect of their flotilla. — Regattas. — The kayak. — Lessons in natural history. — Suspicions of the Eskimos. — The umiak. — Inuit lares and penates.

Next morning a little fellow of fourteen who woke up a few moments after me, at once took his little pipe and swallowed a few mouthfuls of smoke. At his tender age the effect of the narcotic was such that he keeled over at once and rolled off the pile of bedding on which he'd been lying. I rushed off to get some cold water with which to bring him back from his faint, but on my return he was already back to normal and smiling.

"Oh tsitle [man]" he told me with a reasonable air, "this often happens to me."

I went to sleep again and did not wake up until nine and found no one in the tent. The southeasterly storm was whipping the gigantic willows, which are a feature of the Peel River and which I've seen nowhere else, to and fro. The air was strikingly refreshed as by a squall of the mistral.

As soon as my two Hareskins saw me they cried out that they did not want to stay long among these evil Eskimos, that they'd not shut an eye all night and that during my sleep the young men of the camp had come to attack them, to pillage our canoe.

But since the young Eskimos had actually merely threatened them, to taunt them, I was able to calm the two lads and to persuade them to get up and make breakfast.

A moment later we heard loud shouts over the river and there were several Inuit returning from checking their fish nets. They uttered cries of distress loud enough to wake the whole camp. They said that during the night the storm had caused a considerable landslide and this had submerged nine of their fish nets. Chief Oupik had lost all of his, Anhoutchinak only one, but Inontakrark's and Kroanark's nets were intact.

Those poor people told me that this loss was a real disaster for them. But why had they been so ill advised as to set their nets in these unsettled waters? One cannot fish while the rivers are running high and the water is discoloured with mud. Of course, not one of them had brought back a fish.

I was also told that several of the children had developed influenza since we left the fort. A very small child of Mimirnak's seemed to be quite dangerously affected. I saw in these misfortunes obstacles which their god Tornrark, who is no other than the devil, had put forward to hinder the introduction of the gospel among this

people devoted to crime and death. These events also caused the Eskimos to look at me with suspicion. Their faces were already sombre and there were no smiles; there were whispers at my approach - they spied on my every movement, in order to interpret it, and wrinkled their noses when talking about me.

Alas, a great man's glory is ephemeral, among savages as among the civilized.

Lacking fish, we breakfasted on muskrats or kivalot and then departed. During the course of our morning's travel the Niro-kilov-alouk divided into two - one channel leading to the main western channel of the Mackenzie which is called the Niro-tounar-louk.

We therefore left the main channel of the Peel to follow this larger one which would lead us into the northern part of the delta. As we advanced north on a very fast current, I noticed that the vegetation was more and more backward. The willow buds had hardly started to open and the leaves of the elders were not yet formed and yet it was June 25th. The southeast wind which still reigned slowed down development of the vegetation by bringing back cold weather. Again we called on the northwest wind which would not come.

Toward noon our channel widened strangely so as to resemble the Mackenzie and we were able to see the Tchi-Kwajen or Black Mountains with their pyramidal slopes and perpendicular precipices. The Nakotchro Kloundie plateau was quite hidden so that these sawtooth mountains seemed nearer to the river. I could make out the deep cut which marked the Tdha-zjit or Rat River. It is probably hereabouts that Franklin thought the mountains were 11 km from the river.

The immense panorama enabled me to understand why he, as well as Pullen, could have mistaken the Peel for the Mackenzie in spite of the protests of their guides.

Right now the river presented a most picturesque scene, with its flotilla of umiaks and kayaks, the first speeding at the rate of wood lice, dabbling about any old how and in capricious zigzags while their women sailors panted and perspired in spite of their very scanty clothing and the cold wind, while the kayaks, light and svelte, glided over the mud coloured waves like sylphs, flying in search of muskrats and mink, both very abundant in the delta.

The Eskimos use a trident to hunt these animals, the shank of which fits into the groove of a wooden shaft, called notsark, which is held in the right hand. The shaft is raised and held obliquely, the trident pointing forward and down and is thrown by a brisk skillful movement. The weapon follows a parabolic curve like that of a cannon ball in miniature and falls down vertically on the animal to be taken.

Spears and harpoons used in sealing are thrown in the same way. It requires very good judgement of distance by the eye and considerable skill.

While hunting muskrats in these wooded channels for their daily "bread" the young Eskimo men at the same time raced one another in their kayaks and performed all sorts of nautical evolutions. They challenged my two Jeans to a boat race. The Chipewyan birch bark canoe is by no means sluggish but the Eskimos didn't know that. In the race which followed, my canoe, although loaded, with all three of us doing our best at the paddles, managed to keep level with all our competitors in kayaks, for a few minutes.

But we could soon see that our success irritated the Eskimos - how dare we compete with them for speed - so we pretended slowly to lose way bit by bit in spite of our efforts and finally, purely out of politeness, we gave in with a great show of admiration of the speed of their movements. That put them back into good humour.

There is no doubt that the Eskimos are a thoroughly pelagic people. The water is their element - they are at home in it. They share somewhat the nature of amphibians. One might say an Eskimo is a human beaver. Not only do they live by the water by choice, they even place their paradise beneath the sea. Are there not aquatic mammals, birds, insects and plants? Why should there not be aquatic peoples too?

The difference consists in the degree to which one takes to the water voluntarily on the one hand and from necessity on the other. But consider to what degree the Eskimo has made himself fish-like. There is his frail skiff with whale skin stretched and sewn over a light wooden frame, skillfully latched together without a single nail. There is the opening (pah) in the kayak by which he glides into it, seats himself and which closes round his waist like an apron. The kayak is in effect not only his boat but also part of his dress. It becomes part of him. If it founders he is lost. If it capsizes he drowns. [No, the kayak can be righted when upside down by means of the paddle; this manoeuvre was often performed for fun.] But it is too well designed to founder or capsize. With the short double paddle (paotik) with its thick heavy shaft in hand, the Eskimo can make his kayak fly over the surface of the sea like a sort of water locomotive - an anthropo-ichthic creation. Man and kayak have become one.

One can search among the peoples of the Americas and the islands of the Pacific in vain to find a slimmer, lighter boat, one more fit to challenge the waves, to cross the surf or to flit over calm waters like a seagull.

Young Eskimo men don't seem to hunt without at the same time racing one another in their kayaks. One can see that this gives them as much pleasure as the Plains Indians get out of racing their horses.

Neither the Venetian gondola, the Turkish caique or the punts one sees on the Thames or the Seine can rival the kayak. The plump young men who ride them with such grace and skill can beach them without scratching their slim vessels when it looks as if they must get broken. They crawl out of the boat like a butterfly emerging from the larva, mop up the little bit of water which has seeped through the seams of the skin covering of the kayak, arrange four sticks into two X's and carefully place the boat on this little trestle, well out of contact with the ground.

One can see that Eskimo men are as proud and as much in love with these boats as the Sioux are with the horses they use for hunting, or the Arabs of their camels.

Before leaving his kayak the Eskimo fishes a wooden ladle out of his parka and carefully pours water over the kayak so that the sun shall not dry out and tighten the skins too much and make it crack like an over-stretched drum skin. He repeats this operation several times a day.

We landed on the right bank in order to eat. Right away the heads of families went off to set their nets at the entries of small rivers into the channel or at the mouths of cross-channels.

"Tchiglerk, fellow" Kroanark said to me in a tone that struck me as overly familiar. "Tchiglerk, light a fire!"

I told him gently and without a show of temper, "First of all, I'm not to be called fellow, but chief, or better yet father, which I prefer, for although I'm young I am your father by virtue of my feelings toward you. Secondly, there are young men about and I shall not abase myself to make you a fire when they are at hand."

The good old man accepted this remonstrance calmly and lit his fire himself. Tchiatsiark, my companion on the journey along the Anderson, now brought the yield of his hunt to the fire; it consisted of eight muskrats. They were skinned and impaled on sharpened sticks placed around the fire to roast there. It was bitterly cold and all the people had gathered together. Tchiatsiark told of his exploits with expressive mimicry. The spasms of the poor rats caught on the points of his trident and dying there, were described by him with laughable contortions. He imitated a dying muskrat to make his comrades laugh. What grown-up children!

Suddenly a change of subject; he explained it to me. It arose from a little instrument made out of fossil mammoth ivory or kilekouvark, which is common on all the shores of the Arctic Ocean, in the Yukon valley and the shores of the Kuskokwim. When I was staying with Noulloumallok we had already talked about these antideluvian animals. I had described them to my listeners on the basis of the present-day elephant. Tchiatsiark wanted me to repeat these

scientific details and thanked me for them so effusively it would have been laughable did it not show the eager desire of these people for knowledge.

I learned later that the Malligmiut Eskimos of Norton Sound have preserved the memory of an elephant-like animal, for one of my confreres, Mr. Lecorre, a man of learned and distinguished intellect, has found their crude representations in black and red on the coffins of these people.

He also saw figures of monkeys there. This surprised me less, for during our present talk, as soon as I had finished describing the elephant, Anhoutchinak asked did I know the animal called okrayeouktouark, or the man who does not talk? Right away he painted for me unequivocal pictures of shaggy grimacing people, walking sometimes erect, sometimes on all fours and climbing trees. I could not fail to recognize the Orangutang or some other Malaysian ape or large monkey which he not only depicted but imitated by grotesque gestures.

The Eskimos say that such creatures inhabited their country long ago when they themselves were living far west of the American continent.

There are no people who love to be entertained by facts from the sciences and arts more than the primitives of America. They are insatiable for knowledge and have the curiosity of intelligent children.

As they were in the right mood, I showed them a map of North America and traced out for them my route from beyond the Atlantic to the Mackenzie delta.

This did not please them at all. They looked at me with sullen, distrustful expressions. One of them, Toulertsen, said in a sardonic vein, "How can you know our country without having seen it? You have been there before travelling underground, haven't you?"

This showed that these simple people had no idea how the knowledge of individuals can be diffused among many by means of the printed word and illustrations. Nor how we transmit thoughts by written characters.

What marvels there were yet for their minds to know and discover.

The first nets were pulled up empty, so we hurried in order soon to be ready to move camp to another site where the fishing might be better. My Eskimo companions scattered to hunt, occasionally throwing a sarcastic remark at me as if I were the cause of the lack of fish and of the cold brought by the easterly wind. Everywhere priests are attacked by the vicious, the ignorant and the superstitious.



Old Tchapoutaytok, among others, approached me in his kayak and asked me for food. Had I given some to all I would have been on short rations next day.

"Wait a bit," I said, "when we've made camp I'll give you some."

"Yes," he answered with a menacing grin, "when we're in camp you'll have something other than food - you'll have neither hunger nor the need to eat, you murderer!"

This threat scared the wits out of my two Jeans.

"Father," they said, "these people are evil. Let's turn back."

But this was not the moment to retreat. Apart from that a word spoken in irritation could not intimidate me.

It was late when we reached another meeting of water channels and camped on shore. This place was expected to be good for fishing.

The weather was very wintery, cold, overcast and gloomy, producing an impression of the utmost melancholy which affected one's spirit. The southeast wind caused this general depression. It rolled heavy grey clouds and storms toward the sea. The air felt colder than it does at Paris in January. I could not stand it on my hands without gloves and the Eskimos hurriedly put on their muskrat skin winter parkas. On all sides one heard curses directed at the southeast wind, the mistral of the Arctic lands. Frequent coughs could be heard from all the tents as if in answer. Influenza had descended on our camp like some kind of predator. What could I do to fight against this affliction - what medicines should I use? The illness would have to take its course and it was not going to be easy to make these people understand that. I handed out some dried meat to those who had not secured any, as well as tea and gave out some belladonna pills to the sick though I had no confidence in this remedy.

What good, I ask you, is any medication against an epidemic cold for people who as soon as they enter their unheated tents, veritable ice houses in this weather, immediately take off all their clothes. True the grown-ups kept themselves decently covered under their fur robes, but the children remained in their Adam's costume without any protection from the cold in spite of my hygienic advice, which they could not appreciate.

Next morning I got up before my hosts to write up my diary. It was a fine day. The wind had dropped somewhat and the sun was shining. I left the tent where I'd slept and walked down to my canoe, took my notebooks out of my little chest and began to write, believing myself to be sheltered from curious eyes and importunate questions.

But the Eskimos had spied me out. A few moments later the sorcerer Avanemeork began to call out from the top of the bank beneath which the canoe was tethered.

"What is he doing now? He keeps on blackening paper and talking to a book. Evidently the fellow can't be good."

At these cries everyone ran to the river bank.

"But really," he said, "tell us what you are doing there."

I looked at him with a smile and answered, "Nerountor - nothing, nothing at all."

No one was satisfied by this evasive answer so I transcribed some Eskimo words in my notebook and read them out aloud as I wrote. The crowd began to laugh and the magician turned back discomfited. I'd proved the baselessness of their suspicions to them.

During these goings-on Tchiatsiark had returned from his net, his kayak full of fish and his heart full of enthusiasm. As he passed by my side he thanked me warmly as if I had been the author of his good luck and placed two enormous inconnus beside me for my and my people's meal.

This then was the role assigned to me. I was a sort of beneficent God, black or white, probably more black than white or both together, to whom was attributed everything that mysteriously happened, good or bad. It was a role I certainly did not like.

The influenza continued to rage in this warmer weather and the people thought it proper to exhibit their fetishes out of doors.

Then after breakfast our little flotilla of eight umiaks once more sailed the waters. The umiak is the vessel for transport, for fishing and whaling, the family boat, their lighter and store ship. It carries the children, the old people, the incapacitated and the sick and it is conducted and propelled exclusively by the women. They use long oars of Indian or Egyptian style, a pole with an oval or lanceolate blade onto which whale flukes are sown. You see the umiaks advance in clumsy zigzags, moving to and fro like crabs. In shape they are like miniature Chinese junks. The bow ends in a forked beak onto which the stream cable of the harpoon can be wound when a whale is wounded. The raised poop is furnished with a little castle and another little triangular appendix which is reminiscent of the harps placed on the front of our ships. It serves the same purpose. These boats are made of skins of the white whale sown together, stretched over a strong wooden frame.

That day every umiak was decorated by the skin of some beast or that of some bird spread on little sticks like the paper on a kite,

fluttering from a pole. I could see in this the influence of Oriental conjurers.

Inontakrark, my host, had a bald eagle on his fetish. Its wings and tail were spread as in the arms of Russia, Prussia and Austria. Who knows whether in ancient times the blazon of these powers did not have some such origin?

From that day onward the eagle skin was carefully carried into the tent wherever we camped and hung above my head as a talisman or preserver. It was their blessed palm twig.

Mimirnak had two magpies tied together as his gods [magpies don't occur this far north; Petitot must have misidentified the birds], another man a weasel, Oupik the chief, a snowy owl, in allusion to his name, and so on.

But the luckiest one in this regard was certainly Anhoutchinak. When I asked him why he displayed no animal totem he said, "That's because its too big to move about."

"Really, what is it then?"

"Its the whale," he said with pride, showing me a little parchment package which hung from his headband of wolverine skin. "Inside this is a little piece of his blubber which I renew every year. It is strong medicine," he said gravely. "It makes me invulnerable to arrows, knives and even rifle bullets."

Happy, three times happy Anhoutchinak, you surpassed the valiant Achilles who was vulnerable in the heel [and died as a result of an arrow discharged into it by Paris]. If my good host had heard of cannon he would no doubt have included them among the weapons against which his piece of lard protected him.

We may laugh at such childish superstitions. But how many serious Christians believe in amulets and bedeck themselves with them? How many believe that a blessed palm twig protects against lightning and a scapulary against drowning?

The Eskimos cover not only the boats and tents but also their clothing with such talismans using objects such as feathers of falcons or owls, an eagle's fang, bearclaws, mink and ermine skins, heads of ravens, pendants of iron ore, lead or ivory. These decorations make them look somewhat like peddlers of rat poison.

All this bric-à-brac hangs down over the chest, over the back or the sides and there are items worn on the head or dangling along the spine. A splendid white wolf tail or the tail of a fox or wolverine often hangs down from a hunter's lower back. The owner tosses it about as if it were part of himself, creating the illusion of some unnatural animal.

This is depressing. There is always an abyss between the superstitions of a Christian or any worshipper of the true God and those of a fetishist. The first often attributes great powers to objects which have none but which in his mind are blessed by God. Thus in the last resort he puts his faith in God when his devotion becomes more sophisticated and intelligent. The fetishist, however, puts his faith in the animals he believes are his protectors - he sees himself as inferior to the beasts; he takes pride in resembling them and raises them into divinities. And these people who fear no man, who mock God and invoke the devil, cry out in alarm when a blue fly stings them or a dragonfly's wing brushes their face. You will then see them pursue the innocent insect to the death and sing out in triumph when they have destroyed it; a burlesque parody of bravery. From the fear betrayed in their faces and the glory which overtakes them when they have killed the paltry insect, one can deduce that they attribute immense malignity and power to these creatures.

Yet the Inuit are not at the bottom of the ladder of the human family as has been claimed by some who have never seen them nor studied them on their home ground. Though farthest away from centres of civilization the Eskimos are not the most primitive and destitute of peoples. In a material aspect they suffer much less than some Indians who live in more hospitable country and have had contact and often support from Europeans for over a century. Considering their environment the Eskimos actually live comfortably and further, only they know the secret of living among almost perpetual ice. Arctic explorers have found themselves forced to imitate Eskimo ways, a way-of-life often difficult for white men, instead of changing the Eskimo way-of-life to theirs.

With the Inuit, routine does not have the force it has with Orientals who persist in the superannuated and sometimes ridiculous customs of their ancestors. The Eskimos profit from what is useful to them of the white man's ways while having the common sense to despise what is incompatible with their mode of existence or the extremes of their climate. In this they show more judgement than the northern Indians, who because they imitated Europeans in everything and forgot the skills of their ancestors, are exposed to diseases and an early death.

Since my journey to the mouth of the Anderson I found the Eskimos had made appreciable progress. At that time they refused to eat with me, or if they did, they coupled the acceptance of strange food with superstitions and gestures to protect themselves from its possible evil influence. Now they are just as eager as the Indians for all my articles of food and do not refuse anything.

That very day they gave me a new proof of their imitative tendency. The wind had become favourable and I hoisted a sail on my canoe. This soon carried me far ahead of their clumsy umiaks. Right

away they set about to hoist makeshift sails, going into the forest to cut masts and spars. In no time they had square sails much like my own.

The Chiglit decorate their sails like the ancient and modern boatmen of Egypt with bands of coloured material and with fringes.

## CHAPTER VI. THE EXPEDITION MISCARRIES

Suspicious continue. — Inontakrark's excellent disposition. — A shaman. — Kroanark. — Lack of moral sense. — We re-enter a channel of the Mackenzie. — Unexpected death of an infant. — Excessive excitement of its parents. — Hostile attitude of the people.

In spite of my influence with the Eskimos, I could see that there were some among them who were my enemies, who did not hide their antipathy and their distrust toward me. I was watched all the time and had not the least liberty of action. One day, just to see how long was the leash on which they kept me, I stayed behind with my Indians, planning not to embark until all the rest had passed on in their boats. A quarter of an hour later two kayaks, which had been hidden in a bay of the shore, suddenly emerged, about to accost our canoe, one from each side.

Oupik, the chief, and old Kroanark had hidden themselves to spy out my movements. Perhaps it was only the first-named who was mistrustful, while the second one had stayed with him to protect me.

However that may have been, they found me peacefully reciting my prayers. That displeased the chief.

"He has his nose in the kraleouyark again."

His old companion remarked kindly, "Quick, quick, follow us. Do not stay behind."

How I should have liked to show them how their suspicions insulted my pride, but I had to stay within their reach, and above all I had to avoid anything which might incite them to violence.

Suddenly, when I expected the little flotilla to be still far ahead of us, we rounded a bend and found ourselves nose to nose with the whole band. They had been waiting, ready to pursue us had we attempted to turn back. We were suspected of being up to some mischief we knew nothing about.

"It is always like this with the shaven heads," little Jean, who had known them a long time, said to me. "If you think you are free while you are with them, you are wrong. They are always hovering over you like hawks. I tell you, they are wicked."

We were hailed in imperious tones from one of the umiaks. I think it was old Tsapoutatok who spoke. He ordered us not to go ahead nor to fall behind, but to travel in their midst.

Soon after this, Oupik gave the sign to make camp on the left bank as the wind had strengthened a great deal since mid-day and it was now too cold for one's hands to row. I too felt quite numb in my canoe.

We hurried to light a great fire on the shore beneath the gigantic willows and the two Jeans prepared supper. We had not yet eaten that day, for we had planned to reach the great camp where the rest of the population was.

While the women set up the tents and the muskrats were roasting over the fires, a new discussion about me arose among the men. They argued to and fro whether I was the cause of the cold, of the wind that was unfavourable to hunting, and of the sickness that was among them since I had joined them. Oupik, the chief, the medicine man, Mimirnak, and his sons, and above all Tsapoutatok, argued against my two hosts and old Kroanark.

But what could these three honest fellows do against all the rest of the little tribe but to repeat that I was not a sorcerer, that there are none among the whites, that I was kind, and that it was the Loucheux who were to blame for all the bad things which had happened.

Inontakrark did the impossible in favour of my cause. He was my advocate, and because he was my guide, he had influence. I had the satisfaction of seeing that he held out against the malevolent and dispelled their distrust a little.

But what could this poor man, who had not seen me for three years since our journey in common on the Anderson in 1865, say? Well, he spoke to them about Commander Pullen and his Arctic expedition in 1848 in which he had taken part.

"The whites love us," said this good and simple man. "They are not wicked like we are. They do not steal and they do not kill anyone in anger. You have no reason to distrust that one. I who talk to you, I have seen, watched and studied Captain Pullen in my youth, he who came from the sea to eat seal meat. Well, he acted like that one (he did not name me in order not to arouse my suspicions), he looked into books, he wrote on paper, he looked at the sun and the moon through a great metal tube. That is all. No doubt that was to discover fish, moose, caribou and seals, which are necessary for life. This surpasses us. We do not know how one can pass one's time doing things like that. But as these white men have sense, one must believe that they gain their livelihood by these weird means."

As he spoke, Inontakrark mimicked the British Lieutenant Commander marvelously. He posed as if reading a sextant, closing an eye to read the altitude, he aped scribbling on paper and passed his hands behind his back, to the great hilarity of those present.

When he saw his compatriots reassured, he came to me to say that several of the men had certain things to tell me but had not dared to bring them up until now. I knew what they wanted to tell me. It was to speak of the sick ones they had concealed from me until then.

Oupik was the first to tell me of his sons, who had very bad colds which even prevented them from sleeping. He stammered as he told me this, as if it were a disgrace to have a cold, as if the knowledge of their infirmities would lower his sons in my esteem. Anhoutchinak said his sister's child was about to die of the same disease. I was told the same about Tsapoutatok and Toulérksen.

I could understand it all from the strange manners which accompanied these avowals. They really believed I was the cause of these misfortunes, that my writing and my prayers carried misfortune to them. So I resolved to drop all that sort of activity which might only confirm their suspicions and to travel always in their company.

I also promised them to look after their sick, just as I had looked after sick Indians or whites in the vicinity of my mission, and I told them that my services would be free. That evening I began to visit the sick and to distribute medicines among them. I would even have baptized Mimirnak's sick baby if I had thought it was in danger. Unfortunately, I put this off until the next day. I was gravely mistaken in this, as I avow, and I have always reproached myself about this excess of caution as well as of my negligence. When I had made my rounds, I ate with the Eskimos, seated near the fire, with great appetite, sharing my food with them. My amiability and Inontakrark's and Kroanark's words in my favour seemed to restore the confidence of the people in me. Again and again the old man repeated, "The preacher is good. My brother Noulloumallok has said so. That man loves us. It is the Loucheux who are the cause of all our troubles."

It would have been useless to defend the unfortunate Loucheux against this imputation of sorcery. The Eskimos would not have understood me, and nothing would have been gained.

As usual, I ate with my hosts, leaving the two Indians in the canoe. They had nothing to fear; they were under my protection, and since they were not Loucheux, they were not hated.

My hosts offered me a new dish. It was the roots of the plant *Hedysarum boreale* dipped in seal oil. I accepted the roots, which are sweet and tender, but declined the sauce. They also had another, rather more disgusting dish, minute herrings or other small fish, quite red, preserved in white whale oil. They ate this raw. I thought of the famous zhikki of the Loucheux of the Yukon River valley. But I could not persuade myself to try these horrible "anchovies."

The day following this very cold one, we did not travel. I fretted at this, being impatient to reach the village on the coast and to live in a comfortable wooden house. I had become tired of tent life because of the darkness, the infection that was about, and because of the cold which brought back the rheumatism of the heart from which I had suffered the winter before.



Though they did not inform me of it, this day spent on land was devoted to magic incantations performed by Avanemeork. I made use of the time to visit the sick again, but I always ran across the medicine man in this or that household. At last, as I was about to call on Toulerktsen, I was hindered from entering the tent.

The shaman was up to his tricks inside, telling, singing, ordering Tornrark to leave the sick man in peace. The rogue had gotten ahead of me. If I tried to break up his incantations, he would play some trick on me. I had to wait at the entrance of the tent where my patient was, while the anregok inside screeched and hissed like an angry cat. Suddenly the tent flap was raised and out he rushed, furious, a blood-dripping knife in his hand. No doubt he wanted me to believe he was still in the power and the inspiration of his god, a beast god.

When I entered Toulerktsen's tent, I saw him covered with blood. He looked at me calmly, with a joyous expression, pointing to the left side of his chest where the sorcerer had made a cut about two inches long and had sucked up some of the blood.

What a cure for the "flu" that was.

The patient refused my remedies but accepted a morsel of meat as he was too sick to hunt.

My visits to the sick and my little handouts of meat - the daily bread of the country, seemed to touch the Eskimos. At noon they assembled in council, around a great fire in the woods, and asked me to take part. I found this invitation touching. I was myself affected by this bleak return of winter temperatures.

I did not conceal from them that I was unwell myself, but was far from accusing them of having caused my illness. I took some opiate pills in front of them and distributed others to those who had bad head colds and made them sniff camphor as an antidote against migraine - slight palliative measures.

When I went to visit old Kroanark, his son, that villanous, limping fellow, shot one of his oblique glances at me and said to his father, "You can see, there is only one man among the three of them; the other two are scared. They would be easy to get rid of."

Kroanark told his son off severely and forbade his harming my two young companions. I complained to the old man that the night before his son had stolen some of my meat and had wanted to attack my two servants. He reassured me that that sort of thing would not happen again.

After he had told off his son, he invited me to sit on his couch and, pulling out a little container which he called his medicine box,

he displayed, like Innonarana had formerly done, all its riches to me, assuring me with pride that none of his compatriots had anything like this. It was true, my hosts had no Pandora's box to equal it. His treasure consisted of bird skins, shrivelled shrews, butterflies between two little boards, pieces of fossil ivory, arrows and harpoons, arrowheads of a translucent greenish stone, unfinished pipes, bundles of unfeathered arrows, in short a mixture much as Noulloumallok had shown me.

The old man also told me that the Hudson Bay Company had only started to trade with the Eskimos twenty years earlier. Before that the Eskimos traded on the Anderson River with the Hare Indians and at Tsi-kka-tchig with the Loucheux, who it seems often cheated them. The Indians themselves got their goods at Fort Good Hope, then the most northerly trading post in America.

All the same, it is probable that the Russian trading forts in Alaska were established at an earlier period. Even before they were founded, Barter Island was used as a place, according to Sir John Richardson, where goods from the fair of Ostrovny on the Kolima in Siberia were exchanged for furs brought by the Avanemeout of the Colville River area and Herschel Island, who in turn exchanged goods with the Chiglit of the Mackenzie. The Natervalinet were the extreme western Eskimos who received goods involved in this trade from the Chukchi of Asia [i.e. easternmost Siberia].

Because of these far-flung coastal trade routes, von Baer has, aptly in my opinion, likened the Eskimos to the Phoenicians.

After our sick had been allowed a full day's rest, which also gave some fish in the area time to get caught in our nets, we continued our journey toward the sea. The day we left the weather was fine, a brilliant sun casting a ruddy glow over the black slopes of the Richardson Mountains so that they looked like blocks of graphite with leaden reflections. At last the willows were showing their spring leaves and the finches eagerly began to squeak - I cannot call their notes a song, among them.

When I got up, the first sight that met my eyes was half a dozen girls paddling and swimming in the muddy channel like so many frogs.

I clapped my hands and called in my loudest voice, "So that is the result of my advice about your health. That is how you cure yourselves of colds and fevers."

But the little sirens simply defied me with innocent laughter. They are so accustomed from birth to see themselves in the costume of Eve that they show no shame whatsoever. Among their parents they are as it were in a school of the most revolting cynicism, so where should they learn feelings of modesty and decency? Are these feelings inborn in mankind? Do not we receive them from our families and in

our education? We should not therefore blame the Eskimos because they do not know what they have not been taught, because they retain that which we try to banish from the frank and pure hearts of our children.

Beyond this, where there is general disesteem and mutual distrust, there immodesty, hatred and violence must exist too as a consequence. This explains the cynicism and depravity of even the best of the Eskimos. Knowing he will not offend anyone's sensitivity or sense of shame, the Eskimo will take no care not to offend public morality. What am I saying - a good Eskimo is unaware of any common or public morality, at least in regard to all acts of nature. He imagines that whatever is natural and necessary can be done openly. Therefore he only disapproves of grave social transgressions, like Noulloumallok's incest with his daughter referred to in the first part of this book; that is to say, transgressions which nature herself condemns.

Alas, to be good men and decent women, we need, such as we are, the esteem and opinion of others. Because of this, calumny and slander are really serious crimes, for they deprive a person of his reputation, make him evil in his own opinion, and often push him into committing the very deed of which he was falsely accused.

One may therefore judge what the life of an Eskimo whom none of his fellows esteems and of whom none form an opinion, is like.

I could soon see that they put a constraint on their behaviour in front of me and allowed themselves no acts of immodesty under my eyes. Why, I may be asked? Because, in spite of their example and what I knew of their lives, I did not commit such acts myself. This was the sole reason of their modesty toward me. This proves that these people, once converted to Christianity and accustomed to the yoke of good manners, will become as chaste as we are,<sup>8</sup> for the mere fear of offending me inspired them with self respect. Men are what you make them. Nothing has a more beneficial effect than the solidarity which links us to one another.

After breakfast we came to a third fork to the right, i.e. to the east of the channel we were on. This led us into the main west channel of the Mackenzie delta, which we therefore followed, leaving the Peel. It was the Kourvik-illouveartor followed by Franklin in 1826, which he followed upstream as far as Fort Peel in error, thinking he was on the Mackenzie. I can vouch for the fact that in this maze of channels it is easy to go wrong.

There are still some trees here, but they get rarer and rarer. The Tchi-kwajen range visible from here is treeless, covered only with thick reindeer moss. We must have been at the latitude of the south point of Halket Island at 68°30'N (137°12' west of Paris). But these supposed islands of the explorers exist only on paper. Franklin's Halket Island is really a multitude of smaller islets separated by waterways which run in every direction. At its northern extremity lies the Eskimo village, Ikotsik, or the Elbow.

Soon after we had started to move, I noticed that Mimirnak's oldest son, the brother-in-law of our host Anhoutchinak, whose little child was sick, never left the side of my canoe for a moment. This young man, in his twenties, brown-skinned, well built and pleasant in his manner until then, had assumed a malevolent and sardonic expression which struck me. While following us closely, he muttered something between his teeth which did not please me.

The small Jean, who understands Eskimo, said, "Father, let us not keep company with this youth. I do not know what is bothering him, but it is nothing good. He hates you."

"Take us wherever you wish," I said.

For it was small Jean, otherwise Captain Ball, who steered our canoe. He guided us out into the open to join the kayaks and the umiak of our protectors, but the young Eskimo who had followed us at once plied his paddle and barred our way, trying to edge us toward the shore, while it looked as if our guides wanted to escape from us.

These manoeuvres intrigued me and scared my two Indians. They called out, "What is going on, Father? The shaven heads are not acting naturally at all. It looks as if they were plotting something against us."

"I have noticed it too," I answered, "but I do not understand what is going on at all. Let us put on a bold front and keep going."

As we entered the Mackenzie, the umiaks performed a singular movement which I could not understand. It looked as if all of them were lying in wait for one another, as if a general distrust had overcome all these people. All seemed to look at me for no reason I was aware of.

Then I saw Mimirnak's woman's boat separate itself from the rest and make toward the bank of the Tounar-louk we had just left. At the same instant Mimirnak, his eldest son and the conjurer rushed toward my canoe in their kayaks. But my two good hosts and old Kroanark intersposed theirs and came up to my canoe as if to defend it.

"Tchouva-tchouva?" I asked them. "What is up?"

"Ouninnin! nothing!" was the answer, and they smiled as they said it.

Then Chief Oupik, having ordered that we get under way again, they let go of my canoe but urged that I keep very close to them if I wanted to remain safe. Again, what was it all about?

Suddenly a woman could be heard weeping and crying at the confluence of the two rivers. That explained everything. Mimirnak's

little child had just died; alas, they were performing the obsequies. The father and older brother, as well as the medicine man who was jealous of me, had approached me with some evil intention to avenge the child's death, for which they blamed me. They would, no doubt, have killed me had my protectors not crossed their path and then surrounded my canoe.

Several Arctic expeditions have been attacked for some such reason, among them that of Sir John Ross in the gulf of Boothia.

A rock thawed out of its lodgement on the height, fell down on a child and killed it. Its father and brothers threw themselves at the Captain with their spears and would have killed him but for the intervention of some friendly Eskimos who were also on the spot. How superstitions and passion can blind human judgement.

Some intuition told me it was the anregok [medicine man], who had come from Herschel Island who had pointed me out to Mimirnak as the author of their misfortune.

There was I with my disinterested zeal and love for these people which led me into danger or at least into a host of uncomfortable disagreements, considered as a murderer of a child a few weeks old, as a result of chance and malevolence. Whether it was from wickedness or as sort of a game, all the Eskimos present looked at me with sardonic grins, the grins of demons.

My Hareskin Indians were petrified with terror, their normal copper colour changed to a pale green. I admit I felt quite ill at ease myself for a few moments, not so much from fear, but at the idea of being the child's assassin in the eyes of these ignorant and too credulous people without seeing a way to show them my blamelessness.

Had I raised my voice and protested loudly, it would only have confirmed them in their senseless persuasion. There was only one way to save myself, to pretend I understood nothing of what was going on and to be daring. But how can I describe my suffering? I offered my life to God from the bottom of my heart for the salvation of these unfortunate people. I enjoined my two young men to put on a bold front while I assumed the most indifferent expression of which I was capable. An Eskimo approached my canoe.

"Do not be scared," he said, grinning. "Come with us, we are not angry at you. Come on."

Another one said, "You are cold? Just a little bit further on and you will not feel cold at all."

"Perhaps you are hungry," said another with a malicious, bestial grin. "This evening we will be at our village and you will feel no more hunger. Hurry up and follow us."

These half-malevolent pleasantries in the face of a family's grief and a funeral made me impatient.

"Well, what does all that mean? Do you hear me complaining? Am I trying to turn back?"

In order to put a stop to these taunts with their double meanings, I pushed my canoe ahead as if meaning to precede the band to the village, which they had assigned as the arena for their stupid vengeance, for Tsapoutaytok had said to them, "It must not be done here for fear of the Irkreleit, the Indians. Let us wait until we are on our own ground at the village."

At that moment, Anhoutchinak rejoined me and said, "You have nothing to fear. It is the young son of my sister who just died, but I know you are not the cause of that."

These few words were more than enough to tell me that even my protector looked on me as connected with the death. Why use such expressions if one has conceived no suspicion whatever against the person addressed? Is it not an insult merely to use them?

Seeing Mimirnak, the child's father, hastening towards us, Anhoutchinak said, "Quick, give him some tobacco. That will make his heart strong."

To me it seemed that if I gave the father a present, that would amount to acknowledging guilt. However, the last part of my host's sentence indicated that a gift under the circumstances was an Eskimo custom, a sort of compliment of condolence, so I took his advice, accompanying the gift of tobacco with a handshake and some kind words. The Eskimo, with a sombre and angry expression, took the present but did not say anything.

After this, we continued our journey until the evening. The Eskimos continued to hunt muskrats on the way while I had to steel myself against the repeated sarcastic remarks of the young people, and above all of the women.

At midnight we camped at the mouth of what was either a small water course or a half-dried up channel. My companions had expected to reach their village that night, but the wind, now from the sea, was so cold and so strong, and there were so many sick, that we were forced to camp only a little distance short of our goal, the village of Ikotsik.

I was literally numb with cold when we set foot on shore. Palpitations and my rheumatism gave me plenty of trouble and I also had a slight fever.

Before going to sleep, I went to visit the afflicted family to say some words of consolation to the mother. As I was trying to

explain how God is the father and master of all creatures and that he acted only for our good, Mimirnak shouted from the bottom of the tent, "Do not listen. The man speaks falsely. He is a liar."

His two oldest sons responded to this insult of their father's by menacing me with their knives. Yet Anhoutchinak had said the father was not angry with me, only the child's mother, and that he would make her see reason. All this irritated me for my host was evidently half suspicious of me too.

I had already left a cache at Point Separation. I thought the spot where we were now was a good locality to leave another. So I told my two young men to place it on the bank of the half-dry channel where I could feel sure no Eskimo would go in summer. They pretended to go muskrat hunting and accomplished their task in complete secrecy.

During their brief absence I was alone among the Eskimos. My isolation among them, short-lived though it was, astonished them. Inontakrark, with that characteristic Eskimo effrontery, came up to me and searched me all over in the presence of several other men. What a humiliation for me. Then he called out, "Not even a knife in his pocket."

I was definitely inexplicable in their eyes. My confidence, based on a good conscience, defied all the injurious distrust of me of these people. But these situations were a heavy strain on me. It was evidently still too early to think of converting people still so far from even the most primitive human and rational feelings.

While my Indians were away, the fish nets were being attended to. These nets are made of fine strands of caribou skin stretched between two poles which are driven into the mud of the bottom. The floats are rounded pieces of light wood and the sinkers stone discs with a central hole. These nets are identical with those of the ancient Egyptians. Similar discs have been found in prehistoric sites in western Europe.

Instead of going to sleep once their tent was raised and made ready, my hosts passed part of the night mounting guard over us, pretending to warm themselves at old Kroanark's fire. Oupik moved around them like some uneasy animal and they would not go to sleep until he had re-entered his own tent. Really, this was too much. I was causing my hosts too much worry. They were in a false position and one too tenuous to last long.

They did not want to reveal the evil designs of their compatriots or betray them to me; at the same time they wanted to keep the promise they had given me to guard me through all dangers right to the end. When I went to sleep beside them in their tent after the return of my two Jeans, my two hosts thanked me effusively for this act of confidence.

They were kind-hearted men, these two. They struggled against their primitive prejudices as well as the antipathy of their people. I resolved to put an end to their difficulties as well as the harassment I had been subjected to myself.



## CHAPTER VII. CHECK BUT NOT MATE

The return is resolved. — Attack and pillage. — Touching farewells of my protectors. — My servants' panic. — Return to MacPherson. — Winter in mid-July. — Departure for Fort Good Hope with Krarayalok.

The aching of my heart and my fever woke me up frequently that night. I overheard a conversation held out in the open by the fire. Old Kroanark and the chief Oupik were disputing the same old subject which kept the local Eskimos in agitation and had been the subject of earlier arguments: was I, yes or no, the cause of the epidemic of 1865 and of the present sickness among them? If not, as Kroanark maintained, basing himself on the witness of his younger son, Noulloumallok, why was my first visit to the Eskimos followed by that hitherto unknown epidemic? Why during this, my second visit, did sickness and misfortune follow those who received me? What must a man to whom disaster and bad luck were so obstinately linked, be like?

If the answer was yes, as everyone, including Oupik, believed, there was no reason to hesitate. I should be sacrificed to the shades of their former chiefs; to appease Tornrark, whom my presence displeased, who darkened at sight of me and then abandoned his adorers. The anregok Avanemeork had said so.

As Kroanark, assured of the support of Inontakrark and Anhoutchinak, led my defense, a conflict with the chief and most of the rest of the people was inevitable unless I restored order and peace among this handfull of savages by heading back to Fort MacPherson.

I laid my plans during the moments of insomnia.

To retrace my steps injured my pride - it would seem to confirm the suspicions of Mimirnak, his family and the chief's. It would expose me to the vengeance of the malevolent who might seize on the moment of our departure to plunder our boat.

To stay in spite of the animosity of the people and my recently recurring illness, with the possibility of a serious relapse which would prevent travel altogether, would place me and my servants in real peril. It would give my hosts continued anxiety, and for what? There was no real hope of converting these people. To stay would place my two simple souls [my hosts] under a tribal ban. There would be hostility toward them, perhaps for many long years, all for no tangible advantage.

I could not light-heartedly be so onerous a burden to my friends.

In addition, my two Hareskins were living in continual transports of fear. For all these reasons, I inclined toward the idea of returning. I merely did not know how events would serve to bring this plan to fruition without confirming the suspicions already expressed

about me and without seeming to show a distrust toward my hosts which I did not feel at all.

The day following this day of trials, circumstances fitted into my plan. One might have said my two honest hosts understood my false position and wanted to end it. They pretended to sleep until nearly all the other Eskimos had left. They made vague replies to all the chief's appeals to get under way and still stayed inside their fur sleeping robes.

Old Kroanark had done the same.

Oupik was upset. These three men openly defied his authority. His argument with Kroanark during the night had not influenced the old man. He continued to affirm that the missionary wanted only their good and had only come this far into their terrible country for love of them. May God reward all three of them for their loyalty and friendship toward me and for their heroic defense of a truth they scarcely understood. Alas, they are dead like so many others of my native friends. Dead without having come to know the religion of peace and joy I had come to bring them and for which their hearts seemed ready. May the just Judge be favourable to them!

By their lack of deference towards his orders and their nonparticipation, these three men repeatedly gave the chief to understand they wanted to separate from the tribe and travel alone with me in another direction and thus save me from the unjust and ridiculous vengeance of Mimirnak and his sons.

It was an excellent idea, which went even further than my own. In the company of three resolute men, our lives were in no danger. I could learn more of the Eskimo language, instruct them properly, and achieve a triple conversion - an excellent seed for the future change of the Inuit nation.

But Tornrark raised another obstacle. Mimirnak and his sons, as if they guessed the project of the three families devoted to me, did not leave and spied on all our doings. In spite of all Anhoutchinak and Inontakrark could say, they obstinately stayed by our fire, waiting and even urging us to leave first. I waited no longer. I told my hosts I was going to turn back because of my state of health - my palpitations and neuralgic pains would not ease up. This was an excuse.

Strangely, instead of reproaching me or trying to persuade me to travel on with them, seeing how near we were to our objective, they breathed more easily, as if delivered of a burden, and said, "That's well thought that, very well thought. But wait, leave us do our part. They're evil, they will rob you."

As they said this they got into their kayaks, approached my luggage and covered it with their hands and made me get into my canoe

with my young men. Then each, seizing my canoe from one side, they called out to Mimirnak and those with him, "Tayma, tayma, ke tsavitoratse! Enough, enough, quick go!"

But the malevolent crew pretended not to hear. They got into their kayaks, threw themselves at my canoe and began the pillage, in spite of the cries of protest of my protectors. These pirates took my cauldron, our cups, my eating utensils, the moose hide jackets of my servants, and several other things. All this, in spite of the outcry raised by my two protectors, and of the tobacco they asked me to distribute among the thieves to assuage their greed. To the Eskimos, tobacco is like the hunk of bloody meat one throws to a tiger or a lion before entering its cage.

My bag and my provisions would also have been stolen like all the rest if Inontakrark had not got into my canoe and sat on them. Meanwhile, the cries of "tayma, tayma" were becoming more numerous, proving that while there are pirates and thieves among the Eskimos there are also honest ones, friends of order and defenders of propriety.

At last the robbers left. Kroanark went to recover my cauldron from his ancient wife. His squint-eyed limping son had taken it and given it to her. The old shrew emitted yells of rage accompanied by childish tears. Nothing else was restored. Never mind. I judged I was lucky to have come out of the affair with my skin in one piece.

Inontakrark and Anhoutchinak stayed close to us for fear their companions were to renew their attack until the latter were far off. Then they shook my hand with an effusion which moved me.

"They're wicked," they said. "They don't like you at all but you are not like them for you are good and kind. Have patience, we'll meet again in better circumstances."

There were tears in their eyes as they spoke these words of farewell. Alas! I was never to see them again.

When they were out of sight we went to pick up our cache of provisions at the mouth of the nearly dry channel. Then as the wind from the sea favoured us we stretched out the sail and sadly made our way inland. We had come level with the end of the Richardson Mountains. Mount Gifford was behind us and the Romanzov chain could be seen as a blue line on the horizon.

I left with an aching heart because I had not been able to do more than to scatter some seeds about the great Christian truths among these people. But the truths of dogma and morality for the propagation of which Frenchmen have made long and dangerous journeys had only been received with mocking laughter or jests in bad taste. I had had about as much success among the Eskimos as a Tibetan Lama would have had as a preacher in Paris.

Though I was no more satisfied than after my first expedition on the Anderson River, I had at least lost nothing in making this second one. I had learnt to pick the good from the bad Eskimos, had learnt something about their cast of character, their feelings towards us, their degree of morality, and some of their customs. Above all, I had learnt something of their language, for I had listed 2,500 nouns or verbs by the time we turned back.

Though within only half a day's journey of the village of Ikotsik, I had not seen it. At our point of return I had been at latitude 68°35'N just beyond the tree line where there were only low willows, orpik or *Salix speciosa*, on the shore.

Beyond that, my journey had not been useless for the Eskimos either. I had left some good impressions and salutary examples with them which calm reflection would recall to their fierce spirits and dispell all the false suspicions which their recent calamities had produced in many of them. Had it not been for these misfortunes and above all for the presence of an angregok among them who neutralized my actions, my efforts would have been successful.

In returning bravely without escaping and without batting an eyelid at their hostile attitude, I had proved to them that I did not need them nor wanted to impose myself on them or to force my religion, which was the motive of my journey, on them. At least I did not show my heels like a [Company?] officer had done some years earlier who saved himself and his people in a panic, leaving his arms and baggage in the hands of the Eskimos after letting them pillage his boat.

Furthermore, my retreat, based on my state of health, was sanctioned by my hosts. The endeavour was postponed to a more favourable moment, that was all.

The northwest wind (Onhanlark) favoured us so much that in three days and nights sailing with the wind behind us, we reached Point Separation, the summer fishing station of the Dindjie.

There was no one there.

My young Hareskins looked on themselves as lucky for having escaped from the fierce hands of the Inuit so quickly for we had expected to meet another band, that of Kouminane, Oupik's brother, on the way. I heard later that this group planned to make for Point Separation, where our other cache was, without camping on the way in order to catch us.

Unfortunately the weather on our way there turned unfavourable; a torrential rain which forced us into the tent came down on the first evening, so we were forced to camp till midnight. We had travelled with the sail since morning. My two young men never closed an eye - they were so nervous in reaction to the danger we had been through.

They were more fearful now than when we were among the Eskimos. Jean Oulla kept his loaded gun beside him and vowed to shoot the first Eskimo to appear. They exchanged conversations like this one.

"It is clear, friend, that those dogs of shaven heads caused this wind and rain in order to delay us so they can slit our throats."

Their excited imaginations then caused them to hear imaginary noises which kept them in alarm and awake all night. When it came time to leave the next day, my two Jeans were as exhausted as if they had survived a siege.

Luckily the wind was still strong. I hoisted the sail, took the rudder and let them sleep in the canoe.

As Tsi-kka-tchig we found the bulk of the Loucheux. I learned from them that the post manager at MacPherson, stimulated by my journey with the Eskimos, proposed to make one to the coast himself, in a boat worked by some Loucheux in order to trade with the Eskimos and then to return to Fort Simpson. It was a useless journey [for most of the natives had already brought their winter furs to him at Fort MacPherson], which only his jealousy of me could explain, but it might serve my interests. Heart-broken as I was at my check with the western Eskimos, I wanted to make up for it by a journey to the coast by an eastern route with fresh provisions, after gathering information at Fort MacPherson.

Jean Trou-Khweye bravely agreed to accompany me. As to Jean Oulla-Yan, though since our arrival among the Dindjie he had been strutting like a young cock, accusing me of having been afraid of the Eskimos and of having resisted his advice to stay with them, when I proposed to return toward the coast by the east channel, the Nalron, with the boat from the fort he lamely refused to come and gave up his place to another Hare Indian whom we found there, Hyacinthe Dzan-you.

If the MacPherson trader refused me passage in his boat, I was going to travel on the Nalron as far as Krikertayoark, the holy island where the Chiglit bury their dead, and live there by fishing until the Eskimos arrived there toward the end of July. Then I would pass the autumn with them at their village of Tchenerark where they gather to catch white whales, and return with them to Fort MacPherson early in October.

So I left Tsi-kka-tchig full of renewed courage and on the 4th of July at 2 a.m. I reached the MacPherson trading post once more, to the great surprise of its "governor." My astonishment when I heard that the manager had never planned to leave and certainly would not send a boat down to the coast was considerable. Later on I knew he had been lying. A boat did go down and trade for furs with the Eskimos. But the manager certainly did not make the trip - he was too cautious for that.

So I wanted to go downstream alone with my two young men, but Kraroyalok-Pabian, who was still awaiting the departure of a boat from MacPherson to Fort Simpson, the chief post on the Mackenzie, where he was to see his sister, did all he could to dissuade me from my project which he considered daring and dangerous.

"You'll get lost in the mouths of the river, chief," he said. "You'll only succeed in dying on the deserted shore of some blind channel. You don't know the places where my compatriots meet. The sea shores there are vast, absolutely vast. Your summer will be wasted in seeking your way out; if by chance you find some Eskimos they will rob you or kill you for you have no protector (illoularalou)."

This reasoning startled me. I could not appreciate its truth in my ignorance of the Arctic coast, but I could see that if I got into trouble I'd be accused of rashness. I wanted to persuade Pabian to come with me but he had as much desire to see Fort Simpson as I had to see the Arctic Ocean, so he refused.

The weather was frightful at this time. On July 4th it hailed at first, then there was a snowstorm which came from the sea and rushed along the mountains just as if it were winter.

Nothing is more depressing than snow in mid-summer.

Kraroyalok took the opportunity to renew his arguments.

"You see, chief, this is a cold summer. We must submit. There is nothing to be done. You could not do worse than to try to reach the coast this year. Wait till the next. I promise to come to look for you here myself to guide you to the good Nakayork who will be your protector and host among his people. He is Navikan's best warrior with whom you'd be safe. Believe me, neither you nor your young men are dressed warm enough for the sea, ice covered as it is in a cold year. If you believe me you'll give up your plans."

The post manager suggested I spend some days in his company if I wanted to build up my Eskimo vocabulary. At first I agreed, but finding myself not free enough to work, I proposed to Kraroyalok that he accompany me to Fort Good Hope, from where the MacPherson boat would pick him up in August and carry him to Simpson.

This proposal pleased him and the woman he had procured for himself for the journey. This was the Aoularena, whom I had tended in her sickness in 1865 at Fort Anderson. The post manager was also content with my decision as it freed him of two useless mouths, not counting mine and that of my two Hareskins.

The snow continued to fall on the 5th and 6th of July and delayed my departure, but on the 7th I left MacPherson with my

two Eskimos and again camped at Point Separation, having vainly tried to persuade Pabian and his common law wife to descend the Mackenzie to the sea with me.

They absolutely refused, so we followed the route to Good Hope, my only thread of consolation being that I could practice my Eskimo through the summer with this young Chiglerk couple.

## CHAPTER VIII. KRARAYALOK

Portrait of Krarayalok and Aoularena. — Meeting with the Loucheux fisherman. — A poor joke. — Reciprocal distrust. — A plot that miscarried. — My Hareskins rebel. — Sailing. — The great panorama. — A terrible dragonfly. — Meeting the Hareskins. — Stay at Good Hope.

On the eighth of July we left the delta in fine weather and passed the ramparts of Kreyrotchouk.

At once my two Eskimo companions lowered their heads and intoned a medicine song of preservation, a sort of prayer to Tornrark. From then on their brows held a frown which did not disappear until they felt safe in my home at Good Hope.

The Eskimo couple were now alone, unarmed in enemy country unknown to them. Their journey to this point showed that their hearts, however accessible to fear, were capable of dominating it and that they had complete confidence in me.

Krarayalok was a heavy-built lad of twenty-eight, tall and massive like a Carib from the Orinoco, like a Hercules but with a child's face. His eyes and his big mouth were always smiling. All day long he went about singing and beating the measure with his knife. When he was not eating or sleeping, it was his most common occupation.

Aoularena No 4, who had lost her husband Krenertork in 1865, had become a sort of omnibus woman. She was petite but well set up like her temporary husband. She had a Kalmuk-type, arrogantly snubbed nose, a full-lipped mouth that made her look a little like a big baby, beautiful eyes and a high, wide forehead. Such was her face, that of a partly debauched child with a somewhat distrustful expression.

Once she was alone with us, she directed all her gracious smiles at both my Hareskin companions in order to secure their goodwill.

"If you think I care for you, you wicked excrementer, you are mistaken. There are much prettier ones than you in my tribe."

This was Dzan-you's compliment to her. Luckily for Aoularena, she could not understand it.

She and her man were installed ahead of me in my wide Chipewyan canoe. They could sleep at their ease there on their furs without troubling themselves about our journey. I never asked Pabian to take his turn at paddling in spite of the remonstrances of my Indians. I never allowed Aoularena to haul in the tow rope, though with the Inuit that is the task of the women or the dogs.

Thanks to the northeast wind (niyerk), we arrived at Tsi-kka-tchig at dinner time, but there was no one there. All the Loucheux had left.



A little before midnight we came across two Loucheux fishing cabins and landed to greet their owners. At once my two Eskimos bounded out of the boat, and with lowered heads, rushed into the first cabin in a movement of fear I could not help noticing.

"What does this mean?" I asked the Loucheux. "Are they afraid of me now?"

"On the contrary, they are scared of us," said the Loucheux, Ttatsede, "for fear we might seek to kill them. They were making for the asylum of my fireplace. They believe we are as evil as they are. Nachi kouttchin,<sup>9</sup> lunatics."

I was far from depreciating the Dindjies' concept of the domestic hearth as a place of refuge. Nothing can honour it more. But the discourteous reflection of the Christian Loucheux reminded me how, as a result of Christ's kindness which we preached to them, they have become the friends of their former enemies, the Eskimos, though the latter still do not know it.

At the entrance of the Tsi-tcha-tchig into the Mackenzie a real character and joker called Vinijie, a good Christian fellow, wanted to get a laugh out of Krarayalok.

"Do you remember," he said to Pabian, "that your father killed mine? Well, now it is my turn to avenge his memory."

The Eskimo, who knew better than I did what an eccentric Vinijie was, had the good sense to laugh at this sally, but Aoularena uttered a piercing shriek, which made everyone laugh.

I put an end to the Indian's game by reprimanding him for his prank.

"I am joking," he answered. "My shaven-headed brother knows it well enough for he knows his father was never mixed up with mine. But it is you who is taking a little bit of fun seriously."

With this he left me, took both Eskimos by the hand, led them into his hut and served them a meal of excellent moose meat, which put them into good humour.

From that moment their mood alternated between terror and immoderate happiness, aroused by several comic-heroic incidents which interested me a great deal since I was studying their reactions.

At first they called my Indian servants dogs because they towed the canoe. I forbade them to insult my people, telling the Eskimos I was the father of the Indians. They burst out laughing, murmuring, "Kreymirb apanwork, the father of dogs."

As the two Hareskins were aware of being the butt of sarcastic remarks, there was soon an exchange of taunts between the two parties. The Indians laughed, called the Eskimos good-for-nothings, lazy bugs, blubber eaters, and so forth.

Stung by these remarks, Kraroyalok and his companion insisted on taking the tow rope. But their plumpness made them poor walkers, their heavy parkas stifled them and they cut their feet bloody on the rough pebbles of the shore. Finally they sat down on a rock and wept like little children.

I called them to me, consoling them like a mother. But the laughter and derision with which Captain Ball and Hyacinthe greeted them is beyond description.

I spent my time making peace between the two parties, encouraging either side impartially as required. Only thus could I have peace myself.

At the end of the third day the Eskimos, who had no idea Fort Good Hope was so far from the Mackenzie delta, were overcome by homesickness and fear. They began to hatch plans to turn back.

In the evening Captain Ball came to tell me softly, "Watch out, father. I overheard Kraroyalok tell his mistress that they would do well to turn back because Good Hope is too far away. They want to get rid of us, seize our belongings and head back toward the sea. That is their plot. Keep your eyes open."

I laughed at this revelation and did not believe a word of it.

However, there was a heavy air of mutual distrust among my four companions that evening.

When the tent was up, my two Christians (of whom I felt as sure as of myself) refused to take their places.

"We shall not sleep with the Kfwi dekheri (the shaven heads)," they said. "We do not want to get our throats cut."

The Eskimos on their side told me they would go no further for fear of the many Loucheux we met on the way. They demanded with loud cries that I take them back toward the coast.

Unfortunately there was not time for that. But I understood the terrors of these two good hearts well enough. I did all I could to build up their confidence and good spirits.

I took all our arms, made them into a bundle, and placed them on the Eskimos' bedding.

"Look my son, you can see that you are worrying yourself over nothing. Here are all our weapons. Keep them near you all night. We are not afraid of you for we love you. On your side, you need not fear us for here we are unarmed."

He smiled through his tears, but sadly, and went to sleep.

To reassure my Hareskins as well, I made them unload and pull ashore my heavy boat, which two persons unaided could not refloat. This way Krarayalok's plans of escape would miscarry. Thus reassured, all four went to sleep.

Because of the heat of the day we went to sleep at nine in the morning and resumed our journey at four in the afternoon. Next day the two Eskimos sat down on a rock with lowered heads and refused breakfast. The young man said, "I can not eat for I have no knife."

"What is this then?" I said, pointing to his folding pocket knife.

"That is too small, I need a tsaviratsiark (a long dagger-like knife) like your young men have."

I understood what was in his mind and said softly, "Look Pabian, give up your evil intentions. We are nothing but your friends. Drink, eat, sleep, laugh at your ease and on your side show us that your heart is white. Look at me. Do I have the face of one who wants your blood?"

He groaned and moaned like a spoiled child, but Madame Aoularena, with pinched lips and fiercely glittering eyes, said to Pabian, "Hurry up and rid us of them. Start with the bearded one - he is the only one here who is a man."

Captain Ball understood the perfidious advice she gave her man too well.

"You can see it, father, they are as vicious as devils. Do you believe me at last? If you do not, at least leave them behind here. Neither Dzan-you nor I will go on with you in the canoe."

"Abandon them here on the shore? Have you gone mad?" I answered Jean somewhat impatiently. "What do you take me for? Stay calm and do your job. I shall be responsible for them. But do not provoke me."

After breakfast, which the Eskimos were unable to eat, they re-embarked. They rested their big heads, their faces worn by fear and home-sickness, one on another's shoulders with a truly pitiable air of abjection.

Now it was the Hareskins who refused to do their part. Sitting on shore grinning, they said they did not want to tow the boat. They said they did not want to have "those two shaven-headed murderers along."

"We are not the dogs of the excrementers," they said. "Make them go away and we will follow you."

"If they have to leave, it will be with me and that canoe," I replied calmly. "There is no middle way, either we travel down to the coast with them or we take them to Good Hope. Choose whichever you like."

They decided to continue our homeward journey, showed unprecedented diligence, and by midnight had us at the mouth of the L'e-ota-la-delin for camp [about ten miles from Good Hope according to Petitot's map].

The two Eskimos, now reassured, were so high-spirited, full of pranks and so unbearable that Hyacinthe loaded his gun and pointed it at them. I uttered a terrible cry and threw myself at the suspicious Hareskin. His bad temper might have compromised my ministry among the Inuit for good.

"Now," I said to our two Eskimos, "we are not in Loucheux country any more. We are in the land of these people, the Dene. They are good, kind people and Christians. They have never been enemies of your people. So be happy, frank and amiable with them or I will not be responsible for anything."

We were able to have a peaceful supper. Then as a wind from the sea sprang up, we set our sail, travelled all night and only set foot on shore next day at ten in the morning at the beginning of a vast expansion of the river called the Grande-Vue.

Before falling asleep, Pabian had said to his companion, "The Krablouna [white man] is good, he loves us. It is we who are wicked."

She wrinkled her nose in assent. Again at disembarking the Eskimos showed excessive high spirits and once again were so irritating that Hyacinthe said to them, "You had better shut your traps, peeled heads, or you will catch a pebble with a bite to it (a rifle ball)."

We were on a fine sandy beach opposite the mouth of the Loon River which I named the Grouard in honour of my best colleague.

The glowing sun, the almost calm warm air and the gentle warmth flowing to us from the range called the Beaver's Trail, invited us to take a bath. We took one before a copious breakfast, which was eaten in an atmosphere of joy and good harmony.

Aoularena had become as lively and alert as a bird. The width of the azure river reminded her of the sea and the sight of the ground squirrels which greeted us with joyful squeaks from the earth cliffs, where they had their dens, moved her to transports of happiness.

She said that all this reminded her of other similar places far away down there on the edge of Tareork, the great salt water.

The joy did not last long. While we were having a bit of a siesta, the wind having dropped, she uttered a piercing cry as if a bear or a wolf had leapt on her, and getting up at a bound, she ran off crying out in horror, "Mana, mana."

"What is it now?" I asked, "What is bothering the woman?"

"Illatkrouitchitortork." said Kraroyalok with ill-concealed fear.

Illatkrouitchitortork? A name as long as a centipede meaning what? One of the elegant aerial neuroptera which during the summer make war on other insects. Yes, a dragonfly with diaphanous wings like a ray of sunshine, had persisted in circling Aoularena's face to rid her of mosquitoes.

She yelled every time its wings brushed her face. She fought with both hands what to her was a new kind of harpy, to which childish superstitions attributed a sinister and malign influence.

Gravely-superb in his indignation and bravely - Kraroyalok got up. He seized his fur parka, pursued the ill-fated insect and did not sit down again until it lay dead at his feet.

That evening we reached the first camp of the Hareskins, who call themselves Kha-tra-gottine, people of the river. They received us with joy and gave the two Eskimos a kinder reception than they had expected.

From there we continued under sail with a good stern wind so that on July 14th, the seventh day since our departure from Point Separation, we arrived at the Fort and Mission of our Lady of Good Hope. It had been a quick journey.

Pabian and his companion, installed in my tent which I placed at their disposal a few feet from the window of my house so that I could come to their help at the first sign, could eat, drink, sleep, smoke and sing whenever they felt like it. It cost them nothing but an hour a day, which they gave me in alternation morning and evening, of talking Eskimo to me.

Apart from one angry scene, for some trivial reason, which Kraroyalok had with Aoularena, I never saw a happier couple. Nothing irritated and nothing threatened them. Everyone greeted them with a

pleasant expression. They were invited to dinner, they were given tobacco, the Dene women led the Eskimo woman into the forest to gather whortle and bearberries. One of them even lent her her clothing, for the Eskimo found her own fur clothing too hot and I had forbidden her to take off her parka [beneath which she was bare to the waist] outside the tent.

At last, on August 6th, the boat from Fort MacPherson arrived and as that from Good Hope was also ready, I embarked for Fort Simpson with my two Eskimo proteges. Simpson lies 250 leagues further south and we did not get back from there until the end of September.

With the departure of my two young Eskimos for the coast, my contact with the Inuit in 1868 came to an end.

## CHAPTER IX. KREYOUKTARK AND NAKOYORK

The warm year. — My paddlers. — Meeting Eskimos. — Nakoyork. — Attack by amazons. — An Eskimo crime of passion. — Kreyouktark's bizarre dance. — The plant *Polygonum ellipticum*. — Mutual jealousies.

We were in the warm year, 1869. The spring, earlier than the year before, had strewn the Telini-Die, the river which drains Great Bear Lake as well as the Mackenzie, with blocks of ice much earlier than usual. On June 1st I left the lake and on the 7th we were leaving Fort Good Hope once more, on the way to the Eskimo coast. Three peoples, though formerly enemies, had looked after me and had, without annoyance, seen me pass from the camps of one tribe to those of another without any feeling but regret that I could not always stay with them. These excellent people had no distrust.

Such were the Dogribs of Great Bear Lake, the Hareskins of Good Hope and the Loucheux of the Mackenzie.

For four years I had been about to add a fourth people to my heterogenous and scattered flock, the Eskimos. The other three, already imbued with Christian ideas and glad at the prospect of having comfortable neighbours, agreed that it would be good and charitable that I should draw on their filial love to go to convert the wild Eskimos of the low country. But the Eskimos would not, without distrust, accept the idea of the Dene or Loucheux sending one of their priests among them to civilize them. That would hurt their pride, arouse their suspicions and insult their sense of superiority.

I took two paddlers who were complete strangers to the Eskimos and who understood not a word of their language. One was the Hareskin, Jean-Marie Yenawetloun, the other the Dogrib, Paul Klele Gadbois, a Metis whose father, whom he had never known, had been a French Canadian and who had been raised in the bush as an Indian by his mother.

As we left Good Hope, there was no ice on the river and not a cloud in the sky. On land all nature was renewed; birds were singing everywhere, insects were humming and the streams were murmuring. It was indeed a warm year.

When we passed Tsi-kka-tchig, the good Loucheux did all they could to dissuade me from going among the Eskimos. Unmoved by their eloquence, we moved on. At once several of them took advantage of our journey to Fort MacPherson and joined their canoes to ours.

I left a small cache at Point Separation as I had done in an earlier year, and I stopped to greet some Eskimos camped at Kourk-louneriar-kourk, in spite of the protests of the Loucheux.

Tsapoutaytok, Navikan's older brother, was camped here with Navikan's oldest son, Oalik. The latter was sick they told me. I entered the tent to find a nude man with an enormous belly sitting cross-legged. Did he have dropsy? What struck me most about him was that the skin of his abdomen was covered with little drains, each of which ended in a tuft of snow-shoe rabbit hairs. He looked a bit like a dressed fowl. It seemed to me the remedy that had been applied to him must be worse than the disease. Anyway, Oalik recovered - I was going to say from his treatment. I saw him the following year at Good Hope in the best of health and full of life.

On the Peel we met a flotilla of Eskimo umiaks and kayaks right away. It was that of the two brothers, Navikan and Tsapoutaytok, whose faces reminded me of portraits of Henry IV and Francis I of France.

"You are late this year," said the great man. "You will not find any of our people at the Fort anymore."

"I came earlier than last year," I replied, "but this is a warm year and the season is early, that is all."

"Well, hurry up and come down to the sea with us or there will be no one to guide you."

"I want to go to the Fort for provisions first, then I will come back right away. I would like to stay on the coast with the good Nakoyork."

"He is still camped on the Peel. You will find him on your way. Hurry."

My two servants, who had looked on this horde with great alarm as in the frightful tinsel of their savagery they surrounded us and rummaged in my canoe, were stupified to see that the Eskimos were actually inoffensive and let us pass peacefully without even, like civilized people, holding us up to ransom. For after all, what are customs, duties and tolls, but a form of ransom imposed at will or by force on the goods of travellers? And what do customs officers do in regard to the luggage of travellers but repeat a new version of what we call an unheard of crime when the poor Eskimos do it?

The Dogrib Klele could not get over his surprise at my assurance among these frightening-looking people.

"In truth, our father is powerful," he said. "All these robbers respect him. Oh, if we had been here alone, what would have happened to us."

Next day we noticed, near two tents on the bank where everyone seemed still to be sleeping, a man of ripe age with a serious face and



curly, silky hair. This is usually an indication of European blood, yet apart from this he had all the features of an Eskimo. I told him who I was and that I was on my way to Fort MacPherson.

"I am going to buy some food and then I want to join the subchief, Nakoyork, and travel to the coast with him," I said.

"I myself am Nakoyork-Irkroyork," he said with a smile. "Hurry and come back here this evening. I will wait for you until tomorrow morning."

My new friend's face pleased me. His honest and gentle appearance, his natural behaviour, in which there was no showing off and no crude effrontery, won all three of us. So we paddled on with renewed energy. A few moments later we met the two Loucheux canoes who had followed us from Tsi-kka-tchig, who when they saw the Eskimos had prudently drawn away from us. Now that all danger was passed, these Loucheux were glad to arrive at the Fort with me where they could boast how they had protected me on the way.

Two miles before we came to the forks of the Peel, we were hailed from the right bank by several men emerging from a group of tents. The howl of the Arctic wolf rang out over the waters. It was the cry of the Eskimos. I answered it, but we continued on our way.

An order to come to the tents was called out to us.

As we had nothing to do there, we took no notice of these people and continued on our way.

Now imprecations rang out. The men pushed an umiak into the water and started to pursue us. We did our best to keep ahead in order not to be delayed by an unnecessary encounter.

But the Eskimos became obstinate in their desire to stop us. Their orders became imperious and menacing, and panic overtook my two Indians and the Loucheux in the other canoes.

"Here they come to rob us," they cried. "What shall we do? How can we get out of this?"

"What shall we do? We will put on a bold face and if they dare try to rob us, we will defend ourselves," I said.

Though I merely felt annoyed and was beginning to get angry, I was not happy at seeing ourselves pursued in this way.

Meanwhile, the umiak was visibly gaining on our loaded canoes and soon it was beside us. But lo, the expected fierce and hideous warriors we thought we had seen getting into the skin boat turned out to be only young women and girls. They had seen us from afar and to

play a joke on us they had dressed up as men and had lowered the pitch of their rough and shrill voices to sound like those of men. They had pursued us with that saucy cynical impudence one only encounters among the Eskimos and the street urchins of great cities.

At sight of them, the terror and anger of my companions evaporated in a great outburst of laughter.

However, these women thought they were still fear-inspiring. They started to rummage in our canoes in order to steal, and soon strained the patience of the Indians to the point where they raised their paddles and threatened to whack the women over the head if they did not draw off at top speed.

There were displays of valour from some of them, begging was followed by demands and scoldings mixed with lascivious glances accompanied by demands for tobacco.

These were met by punishments and threats. As much as the Loucheux and the Dene had been cowardly to flee from the supposed Eskimo men, so they now showed themselves brave and intractable towards their women and girls.

Finally the Indians carried the day over these veritable amazons, who gave up but not without calling the Indians dogs and other less complimentary names.

There were only two umiaks at Fort MacPherson. One of them belonged to that red-haired Eskimo I had seen before, whom I took to be a Russian half-breed. To my astonishment Madame Aoularena of the year before was now in his possession. The other umiak belonged to an Eskimo called Kreyouktark, who had the reputation of being a calm and kind person.

As soon as we arrived I went to see the post manager and obtained the provisions I needed for my journey to the sea. I arranged with the two Eskimos that we should all leave that evening so that I should not miss Nakoyork. During the day Kreyouktark came to ask me to interpret for him with the company servant about his trade. While making this request, Kreyouktark experienced a sort of fit such that his whole body trembled and his cheeks and the skin of his face twitched like a horse's skin when it is trying to rid itself of a fly or a mosquito. Yet I had received the good man with a smile. The occasion proved to me that Eskimos are liable to experience fear as much as other primitive peoples.

That spring on the coast, one of those bloody dramas which fortunately have not happened among the Dene or the Loucheux, took place among the western Eskimos. The reader may recall Toulertsen, the young man I had seen the year before when he was sick and the medicine man, Avaneomeork, had cut into his left breast as a cure.

Toulerktsen had the prettiest woman of the tribe as his wife. I had admired the delicacy of her features and her distinguished appearance. There was evidently some white blood in the veins of this eighteen-year-old young woman.

Toulerktsen remained ill all winter and another man of his band undertook the conquest of his dear better half. He failed, for the young woman loved and feared her husband. I do not know the would-be seducer's name, but I would not be surprised if it was the shaman himself. However that may be, the despised suitor was so enraged that he resolved to revenge himself. He entered the couple's tent, knowing that the sick husband could neither move or give the alarm. He passed a thin strap round the sleeping woman's neck, passed it over the ridge pole of the tent and then pulled on it with such force that he strangled his victim, outraging her at the same time.

Toulerktsen, unable to help his beloved or even to cry out for help, saw that the only thing he could do was to pretend to have seen nothing for fear of being killed as well. Then when he was cured and once more felt strong, he went, not at night but openly in the daytime, to the tent of the infamous murderer and killed him with his dagger before the rest of the people. Thus he nobly avenged his unfortunate wife and washed the injury done to himself in blood.

The reader must admit that the strangler had merited his fate. That is the law of retaliation. In such a country it is in full force, it is just and recognized.

Kreyouktark (the spoon) is a soft-voiced Eskimo gentleman with a pleasant smile and features suggesting spirituality. His face, which was noble and simple, at the same time reminded me of one of my boyhood friends. His eyes were clear and straight, the nose aquiline, his mouth wide but not sardonic. There was even something of the shyness of a young girl in his looks and manner which I found pleasantly touching. Both the Loucheux and the English had recommended him to me as an honest man and a good father to his family. Though he had two wives, he had only three children, all boys, the two oldest were fourteen and sixteen.

No sooner had we left MacPherson than Kreyouktark set about to gain my confidence and goodwill as well as to excite our hilarity by a most eccentric comedy.

He stood up in his umiak, having turned his kayak over to his son Manark. He took his drum and entertained us first with an Eskimo boat song, the rhythm of which the women followed with the strokes of their oars.

Then he passed on to a singular theatrical performance in which he imitated the stance, the hops, the bizarre contortions, wing beats, even the calls, of a raven, to perfection. He was so comical we had to hold our sides laughing.

The song that went with this fitted the dance. It sounded like a raven being answered by others. Indeed the Eskimo language lends itself to this because of the frequency of the diphthongs *kra* and *ark*.

Seeing himself admired and applauded, master raven shed his plumage and changed his song. With admirable ease and perfect mimicry, he varied the theme of his dance to represent a white whale hunt or that for the much larger bowhead whale. Though I had never seen one of these hunts, I could easily recognize his representation, the approach of the kayak, throwing the harpoon, the movements of the wounded whale, his blood-stained blowings. Everything was faithfully rendered and the song and its rhythm corresponded to the actions portrayed. I will not conceal it - I admired this natural artist. He would have interested Parisians, difficult as they are to please.

And now the man behaved as if he could contain himself no longer and let his enthusiasm go full out, performing a series of the most comical postures and contortions his imagination could conceive.

Suddenly, as his umiak was leaking a little, he wanted to bail it out without interrupting his dance, and incorporated the necessary movements by means of gestures he invented on the spot. So there he was beating his drum with one hand, working the bailer with the other, bounding up and down and twisting himself all at once. It was all so droll that we laughed until the tears came to our eyes and I had to ask him to stop if my paddlers were to continue their work.

Only at nightfall did we reach Nakoyork's camp. Kreyouktark placed his tent beside Nakoyork's and I slept in the former's as Nakoyork's was already filled with sleeping figures.

I had no idea that this simple action of mine would be the cause of many quarrels and mutual jealousy between these two Eskimos. With people who have so little respect for one another, a missionary or explorer should be independent and able to make do without interested or envious native protectors.

During that first night Krarayalok, whom I had protected and cared for the year before, stole some food from my canoe. Kreyouktark, who told me of this in the morning, offered that I should accompany him. He assured me that when a number of his people got together, the bad ones, by far the most numerous, had too many chances to carry out their misdeeds, but that he planned to spend the summer with only his two wives and his sons on the Caribou Hills, and not to move on to the sea until later.

My servants thought that was a good plan.

Why did it cost me so much to go back on the word I had given Krarayalok the year before and to Nakoyork on my way to the Fort? Why did I not follow the good Kreyouktark's advice? That was a great mistake on my part and it became irreparable.

I gave him no definite decision, merely saying that I had promised Nakoyork and would stay with him for the present. I hoped they would stay together and that both would be my friends.

Later on, I realized that each one of them was jealous of the other on my account and hoped his rival would depart so that I would be left with him. Kreyouktark had hoped that Nakoyork would leave while we were asleep, in which case I would have belonged to him. But Nakoyork would not give up his pretensions and stayed in his sleeping robes. So the day passed with both parties waiting in vain.

A second night passed and neither Eskimo wanted to break camp lest he leave his rival and my party behind.

A second day passed, nothing changed in the strange tactics of my two Eskimos. They watched one another, each tried to encourage the other to leave but neither wanted to be the first to do so. Had it not been so boring and a waste of my time, there would have been some entertainment in the performance.

Nakoyork made use of the prolonged stay to invite me to eat some fish, which I accepted readily. There were four men and four women in his tent but no children. Inuit couples with children are scarce, a bad note. Among those present was Nakoyork's eldest son, Kwitkwina - he had a limp in both legs but was an excellent lad, gentle and biddable like all the members of his family.

After the first breakfast, Kreyouktark begged me to give his wife some medicine for she had a phlegmonous ulcer on the thigh. I placed a small plaster of balm of gilead on it. Finally at five in the afternoon the Eskimo camp broke and moved as far as the mouth of the Peel, where they all encamped together. I attributed this short move to their natural laziness and the horror they have of all toilsome work. These people do not know how to suffer real fatigue; long forced marches, fasting for several days, are unknown to them. They are the sybarites of North America.

At dinner I gave each of them a piece of dried meat, and they in return gave me a little bundle of *Polygonum ellipticum* [a species of smartweed], a sort of wild rhubarb. It's hollow, fleshy and juicy stems are sour like sorrel. It makes a refreshing dish in the heat of summer. This plant grows all over this area from Good Hope to the sea, along the river and in other places exposed to the sun.

The Eskimos dip the stems in seal oil, which is their universal sauce.

After the meal, the same hesitations and disputes arose among my companions, and each one seemed to be on the lookout for what might come to pass. I did not ask them about it, but remained neutral, ignoring the issue between them. Finally Nakoyork put an end to the

general uncertainty by asking me suddenly, "Now then, which one of us do you belong to? Don't you see we are ready to rob you if you do not decide, because you have no protector? Will you go with me or with one of those over there?"

I had no doubt I had been the cause of all the hesitation of the last three days. I answered with astonishment.

"But it seems to me I have never promised to travel to the coast with any one but you. I have made no promise to any of the others. I am not in the habit of breaking my word."

Nakoyork's face lit up with joy. He said a few words to Krialokana, the Russian Metis, who looked at me and striking his thigh said, "Kratsia, will you look at that!" and seeing that I stuck to my decision, he immediately signalled his group to depart, leaving by the west channel of the Mackenzie with Aoularena and Nerovana.

All the others, myself included, worked our way upstream to Point Separation, where we encamped once more.

I had not been in doubt but that the red-haired Eskimo too had flattered himself I would give him the preference though I had not said a word to him. His attitude confirmed my opinion that he was a Russian half-breed; knowing himself half-white, he thought that for that reason I would entrust myself to him.

All these men on their own are excellent fellows. But united in a group they are not worth the devil's horns. It is the desire to impress others by the glory of successful vice, that drives them to surpass one another in malice.

In camp I got Kreyouktark to tend my fish nets. That was a second mistake. After my declaration to Nakoyork, I should have had no intimate contacts with his rival. But I was then still ignorant of the puerile element in the Eskimo character. As soon as Kraroyalok saw Kreyouktark tending my nets with his own, he pointed out to me that last year I had engaged to join him, Kraroyalok, and that the fact I had changed my mind had been very injurious to him.

I knew that at bottom none of these people cared a fig for the honour of my company. The dispute among them was over the possession of my goods. In their eyes I was rich - I had several fish nets of twine, a 35 kg ball of meat, firearms and ammunition, household equipment, tobacco, and a musical instrument the chords of which threw them into transports of enjoyment.

I had to make Pabian understand once more that what he was saying did not reflect on my word, that I had made no promise to him in particular. As to the catch from my nets, all of them would have part of it.

These rivalries were becoming tiresome to me.

## CHAPTER X. THE SECOND CHECK

An Illoua-laralou. — White man's marvels. — I choose Nakoyork as my protector. — Kraroyalok's fury. — A sinister project. — Kwitkwina. — Escape of my Indians. — Inexplicable terror of the Inuit. — Second escape of my people. — Abandonment of the canoe.

Without realizing it I'd committed yet a third error. I'd called Kreyouktark Illoua-laralou - my double, my friend.

No sooner had I pronounced the unfortunate word, which seemed to flatter him immensely, than he rushed into Nakoyork's tent to call his compatriots of the honour I'd just bestowed on him.

A few moments later as I was entering Nakoyork's tent myself to put my bedding and some of my things inside, the good fellow said to me sadly, "Why are you coming to sleep here? I'm not your double, Illoua-laralou tchouitor."

Their jealousy included even words.

"That's where you are wrong," I answered, smiling. "You are more than my friend. I consider you like my father, apanha kraouna. As to the rest, they are all my friends and also my children."

"Your children," interrupted the Eskimo with a sardonic air, "you're pretty young to have so much family."

"It's true, I'm young, but I have all the feelings of a father for your people. That is why I express myself that way."

My answer pleased them. But Kreyouktark felt himself reduced to the level of any newcomer and his vanity was offended. He and Nakoyork were like the two pans of a balance, when one rose the other reciprocally went down.

It was painful to him to see me accept the hospitality of Nakoyork's tent, for I had already accepted the hospitality he had offered. These are trespasses which primitives consider offensive and which they carefully avoid. Why did the white man act so independently of their feelings, they must have thought.

These experiences were to help me in the future, but now I had to suffer the consequences of my lack of etiquette. Having treated them too much as mere savages they looked on me as a man who did not know how to live. But how could I have guessed that these apparent savages were no more so than our country people? Beyond that, who among us would be offended if a stranger, having accepted our hospitality for a day or two then went to a neighbour? No doubt this sensitivity honours primitive peoples for it is unknown to us.

Their discontent proved that they attached a great deal to the honour that my being their guest conferred on them. In truth, among primitive people a very ordinary European is considered equal to a son of God. Judge then what a trader, a man of some means or a priest must be to them.

From that moment I stayed with the subchief Nakoyork (the good) without stopping my visits to Kreyouktark who still had charge of my nets.

Krarayalok, who had spent the previous summer with me and who on his return had told of the miracles I performed, without being believed, was happy to save his honour by demonstrating the truth of his reports to his compatriots.

What marvelous and incomprehensible things had he not seen at my home at Fort Good Hope? Watches, clocks, thermometers, a barometer, a compass, a magnet, matches, a music box, a painter's tools, alcohol, photographs, a small organ, a tuning fork and a host of other rarities which enchanted the Eskimos for they had never seen them in the hands of the Hudson Bay Company officers.

Surely only a great magician would own such deviltries.

I had therefore, at his request, to give a sort of demonstration, such as I'd given to Noulloumallok. I changed the theme. I made some needles dance across a little board and over a piece of paper by means of a magnet. I showed them the contradictory effects of the magnet on the two poles of the compass needle. I lit their pipes with matches and they asked me on what tree these little inflammable branches grow.

But when Pabian told them that by means of these little burning sticks or little rubbing things (ikitaotit) I could burn water, they were doubly stupefied.

Burn water - that was unheard of. To prove he was not lying, Krarayalok ran down to the river and came back with a cup of water.

"There, light that in front of them," he told me with a triumphant and assured air.

I started to laugh.

"That water won't burn," I told them. "God has not wished that it should, otherwise since water surrounds the earth the wicked would make the world perish in a flash. The water that I burn is fire water."

"Fire water," they repeated incredulously. "Is there then water in fire? The two things are incompatible."



"That's where you are wrong," I told them. So pulling a little flask of camphorated alcohol out of my medicine bag I poured out a little into a cup. It was water alright, liquid and colourless. I moistened my fingertips with it and quickly passing them over the fire I showed them my finger tips flaming blue and white without getting burned. Then, with my fingers, I lit the trace of alcohol in the cup.

This was really too much for these simple people. They could not find words to express their amazement. Their hearts must have been beating hard and fast for suddenly they all gave a deep sigh and said with emphasis, "It is amazing, it bowls you over."

I don't think that in their time Albertus Magnus, Nostradamus, Julius Aggripa and Cagliostro seemed more amazing or in our time Bosio and Robert Houdini.

On June the 14th the weather was of unparalleled splendour. The air was calm, the sky was the blue of Provence and without the minutest cloud and the heat was intense. The Mackenzie, so wide here as to resemble the sea, showed like the sea those sinuous pale ribbons of colour which indicate the direction of the currents. Kingfishers skimmed over the waves and their rattling calls rang out while large eider ducks, pied black and white, idly and silently floated on the waters accompanied by black scoters with their crow-like plumage and yellow beaks.

What a fine day to get under way! But for the Eskimos the warm weather was an excellent reason for spending the day in the cool of their tents, snoring away and only interrupting their sleep to eat and smoke. What Sybarites.

They seemed well content for me to share their tent, and the women never stopped smiling at me and sticking out their tongues as a sign of friendship and greeting.

The Eskimo's nets of strips of skin did not catch much but mine were marvelously efficient. Kreyouktark took out several huge inconnus as well as some fine whitefish. I gave him the largest part of the catch, sent a fish to each household and kept two for myself and my young men.

Kreyouktark took this opportunity to return to the charge; once more he proposed that I stayed with him. He boasted of his abilities as a fisherman, a hunter, of his goodness and gentleness. He assured me that with him I'd never go short of food all summer. In short, he went all out to win me over.

But I'd already decided for Nakoyork and could not go back on my decision without appearing ridiculous. So I had to excuse myself, alleging the reasons already cited.

He was vexed and from that moment his speech, his air and his manners showed his discontent with me. He felt himself despised. However, I continued to treat him with the same friendliness as the others.

He should have understood I could not belong to several hosts at one time. Krarayalok was just as discontented but he showed his dissatisfaction in a violent scene which showed him up.

In the evening my two Indians served me some dried meat and two large sugared pancakes. I gave a piece of meat to each of the three Eskimo men I knew. The first two accepted but Pabian refused angrily, saying my cauldron was poisoned.

I considered this rejection as equivalent to a declaration of war. This then was the result of my kindness toward this man.

I knew that with the Eskimos to eat with someone or to accept a choice morsel of food is a token of cordiality and friendly understanding. In fact, all peoples attach an idea of fraternity to a meal taken in common. By refusing to eat with me, Krarayalok thus openly declared himself my enemy.

I made him realize what unease he was causing me.

The meat having been eaten, I divided one of the pancakes between my servants and the first two Eskimos without giving Pabian any and said laughing, "I do not offer you any of this dessert, Pabian, as I suppose my frying pan must be as poisoned as my cauldron."

Had I pricked a Provencal mule under the tail I could not have caused such an explosion as that which now plunged Krarayalok into the most fearful rage. Suddenly his face flushed an intense red, his eyes protruded and his face took on a hideous repulsive look, he trembled all over and then snatched up the pancake, tore off a piece, flung it far away and turned over my cooking gear. In short, he acted like a child in a tantrum of frustrated rage.

This scene, which frightened my Dene paddlers who were ordinarily calm, made me smile with pity. But it left Pabian in a dark mood which stayed with him.

With people as irascible as that, who are distrustful and full of suspicions, people whom an innocent pleasantry enrages, the shadow of a suspicion can make them draw the knife or loose an arrow in a moment of puerile fear or uncontrollable rage. My position among them thus exposed me daily to great danger and I could not be sure something fatal might not happen to us.

As we were still in the neutral zone frequented by white men as well as the Loucheux in addition to the Eskimo, things had passed off

fairly well until now. But this would change once we moved on into Eskimo territory. The hesitation I'd noticed among the Eskimos twice in the preceding days happened again though my canoe was loaded and I was ready to follow them.

Pabian stayed on the shore with sombre mien looking sadly down at the ground and sighing deeply. As I did not know whether this meant he felt regret or a concentration of anger, I went to sit down beside him. He turned away sulking.

Nakoyork probably distrustful of his son-in-law's mood, came to my side and stayed with me until he'd seen Pabian get into his boat. Then getting into his own he said, "Ke! tsaviktoren, get under way quickly."

I got into my canoe and we moved off.

First we worked our way upstream as far as the exit of the river from the ramparts, then paddling hard we crossed it into the mouth of the Tiglarve toupalouk, the east central channel, which we descended at a prodigious speed.

Its strong current led us swiftly past the large islands of the delta where we hunted aquatic game. At one island where my servants and I landed we gathered fresh eggs of wild duck, including eiders, of geese and of gulls. The Eskimos did not touch the eggs. They said it was forbidden to them, that there was a taboo.

From the east central channel we passed into the Nalron or east channel, the most sinuous of the four main channels of the delta but no less swift in its current than the others.

As soon as we were in Eskimo country my companions threw off their masks. I could understand that Krarayalok would seek revenge for what he had suffered the summer of the year before, his chimerical fears and the taunts of my Hareskins.

Be that as it may, my Eskimo companions changed from being kind and easy to get on with as they'd been until then, to become disrespectful, sardonic, jeering, sneering and even menacing.

Everything now became a cause of distrust and suspicion. I could do nothing and say nothing but that it was misinterpreted. If I sang and accompanied myself on the concertina, if I recited my set prayers, if I made a note about the journey or sketched a view, I could hear them right away making comments, disparaging my honour and my intentions. I was now in their eyes no more than a murderer (torkorta), a liar (irkroyork), a sorcerer (oroloyouark), a vicious person (tchouinark). Eskimos, shameless and dishonest themselves, and without conscience, dispensed such vile epithets over me. It was a bit much.

Even Kreyouktark, the good simple Kreyouktark and his gentle Manark, even they addressed me with some invectives. It wrung my heart, for I cared for them and I had never wanted anything but their good.

We followed the Nalron for three days. The current was so fast I could not appreciate the distance we covered. At a bend of the shore the Eskimos landed to look for Kwitkwina's umiak which they had cached there the previous autumn. We found the beluga skin of the boat covered with those carnivorous insects (sylpha) which the Dene call black heads (thiekloedh). But they had not been able to perforate the skin and after being cleaned and washed the umiak was placed in the water.

I took the opportunity of this stop to have my meal prepared. I don't know whether this made the Eskimos think I was hesitating about following them, for every little thing served them as an occasion for groundless suspicions, but they seemed upset once more.

When the meat was cooked I offered them some, as I always did. Everyone refused it obstinately, laughing insolently in my face saying that only little Talerk, a two year old child, would dare eat my bewitched food.

But then Paotcine, the subchief's old wife, came forward and gently said, "I'll eat of your meat. So give me some."

I thanked her for showing more confidence in me than the rest of her family and gave her to eat. She considered me affectionately, murmuring with an air of pity, "nana! nana!"

Her son Kwitkwina also approached and invited me to enter his umiak and to convince me of his good intentions he offered me a torkloalik, a reed used to drink while in the boat from the fresh water around.

But the attitude of the band as a whole was so suspicious and threatening I did not want to trust them so far as to leave my Indians alone in my canoe.

"Listen," I told them, "when I told you I wanted to accompany you to the sea and to stay with you, I did it willingly and also voluntarily. Nothing forced me to do it. Well, I intend to remain just as free. I do want to travel with you but I don't intend to be a slave. I've got my own boat, just as you have yours. I'll travel with you, I shall sleep in my tent beside yours and under your protection, I shall eat with you, but I intend to be free. I'm a chief. I would rather give up travelling with you than be treated as a slave or an enemy."

They withdrew somewhat to deliberate on this in a lively manner while my servants and I took our breakfast. I don't know what the Eskimos had proposed to one another. I merely heard one of them ask Krarayalok, "Is he armed?" The reply was "No, he has nothing except the guns of his Indians." Then the discussion went on.

I knew absolutely nothing of what they said after that but it cannot have been anything very licit for Nakoyork's old wife and her daughter-in-law Kwitkwina's wife, who were listening, raised their arms and again cried out "Nana, nana" while looking at me with an air of commiseration and tears in their eyes.

"You are kind," I said to the older of the two, "you are like my mother here. What are they saying, tell me."

She did not answer but broke out into tears.

These goings on annoyed me. I must have been pretty foolish I thought to have given myself all this trouble for such distrustful people. My Indian servants, though they could not understand a word of Eskimo, could feel the danger and menace in the air all the same. They were so scared, they seemed more dead than alive.

"It's getting dangerous, father, isn't it?" they said. "It seems so," I answered, "but I don't know why. They want me to get into one of their umiaks and for you two to follow in my canoe."

"Don't do that father, don't do it. Stay with us," they said to me.

"That's what I intend to do. Our boat is as fast as theirs. We don't hold up their journey. I want to be master of my own things as I am among your people."

"That's fair, don't give in to them."

When Kwitkwina's boat was loaded and our breakfast over, Nakoyork approached me and said, "Chief, get into my umiak and sleep there."

"I've got a large canoe, I've told you, in which I will stay and with which I shall follow you all the way. Apart from that we've slept for three days running. I'm not sleepy now. I want to see the country as we travel downstream."

"But we'll travel night and day till we get to the village of Tchenerark."

"All the same I'll do as you do."

"We shall not land to eat on the way anymore."

"I've dried food in the canoe, we shall eat on the way."

"Your canoe is making water."

"Not at all, the day before yesterday while you were asleep we put more resin on the seams."

"Well then, it's useless, there's nothing to be done," the subchief concluded while turning back to the other Eskimos. Such is the cowardliness of savages that they never attack face to face even if they are twenty to one. They separate their adversaries from one another, take them by surprise in the gloom and thus undo those they believe are their enemies.

As far as I can judge by what happened to me the following year on the Yukon river in Alaska, they planned to intimidate my servants after having separated them from me. They would rob them while I was asleep and scare them into flight. Then they would be completely my masters and would either have got rid of me if I were afraid or they would have kept me a prisoner, to serve as their tame priest, theirs alone without hope of return to the Indians whom they hate and despise.

I shall be charitable enough to assume their objective was the second one. But of course I could not consent even to that. Above all, long live liberty.

I've mentioned that my two young paddlers, though they didn't understand what was said, understood the evil intentions of the Eskimos as well as I did for they hardly tried to disguise them anymore. While I was talking to Nakoyork, my Indians therefore took what the English are pleased to call French leave and vanished into the bush.

So when I turned round to tell them to embark my two Denes were gone. They had escaped leaving me alone amidst the Eskimos. I called out to them but they did not even answer. I followed them into the willows, found them and had all the trouble in the world to persuade them to continue the journey.

They'd intended to turn back and what is more to do it on foot, abandoning my canoe; utterly senseless. I gave them a good telling off and ordered them to follow me. When I got back to the canoe all the Eskimos but Nakoyork and Kraroyalok had left. They waited on the shore by their kayaks. I walked straight toward them, hands in my pockets.

What were they thinking? I've no idea. People who have bad intentions have such chimerical fears which stem from their unsettled conscience. They threw haggard glances to right and left and got up with evident agitation. Insolent as they had been earlier they now

showed abject fear. Fear which caused their faces to tremble. Their eyes searched for a weapon. Pabian passed his hand into the boot on his right leg and pulled out a long knife. Nakoyork, lacking a dagger, picked up a cudgel that happened to be lying there and both stood there as if stunned.

"What are your young men doing?" they asked.

"I don't know. No doubt they drew off for some purpose of their own," I answered. "But here they come, let's leave."

The Indians had their guns in their hands.

"Yes" said the two Eskimos, "let's leave quickly."

Then, trembling with haste they got into their kayaks, seized their double paddles and in the blink of an eye had turned round a point on the shore and were out of sight.

This sudden flight, this panic, stunned me. It was as in the year before. Eskimos and Denes feared one another with an uncontrollable, unreasonable fear.

My young men should have regained courage seeing the prodigious effect their appearance had produced. But not a bit of it.

"They are evil, they hate us," they said, "it's difficult to go and live with such people."

These were their reflections. Meanwhile we embarked in my canoe and followed the Eskimos.

I sought to explain to myself the evident fear of the two Eskimos, for I know heaven has not given me the gift of inspiring terror. All I could imagine was that the two poor heathens, seeing me return from the bush with assurance, hands in my pockets, believed I'd gone there to load two revolvers which I then concealed under my clothes. They have an extreme and justified fear of these terrible weapons. That is all I could conjecture and I believe I was right.

The only way to dispel their unjust suspicions was for us to hurry and rejoin them and not to get separated from them again. I used every effort to persuade my two servants of this. I was convinced that the Eskimos who were now evidently fleeing from us would recover from their scare once they saw us among them with all our former simplicity and friendliness and that they would then drop their injurious suspicions.

At this explanation of mine my savages replied, "Etinhou! Have you ever heard the like?" which showed that I'd spoken to deaf ears.

Klele, the Franco-dogrib, said, "As for me, I would have followed them had they continued to be reasonable. I was already starting to consider them like relatives. But how they changed since we crossed the river. Now I'm too scared of them. We'd better turn back rather than be killed."

"It's true, I tell you the same! Ekkwi deti helle," said the second one, Jean-Marie Yenawetloun, "even if you gave me double pay I would not follow you among these murderers!"

All the same, while this talk was going on we were descending the Nalron and I hoped they would change their minds. I did not know then what was on their minds. But when a little river, an affluent from the Mackenzie appeared on our right they shot the canoe into it with all their strength in spite of my protests. They paddled up this channel for a little distance without my knowing what they intended to do, then when they saw a gently sloping muddy portion of the bank lightly covered with horsetails they pushed the canoe ashore and each of them seizing his gun and ammunition and a packet of dried meat they made for the bush calling for me to follow.

I was petrified by these stunning events which gave me no time to reflect. There was no time to hesitate. I had to follow them in haste or I might loose their tracks and die alone in the forest. As to rejoining the Eskimos, that was impossible. I could not do it alone in so large a canoe.

So I made a virtue of necessity and while calling out to my Indians to moderate their speed, forced myself to follow them across the forest.

That was the outcome of my 1869 expedition to the Mackenzie delta Eskimos. It was an expedition rather like that made some years earlier by some Hudson Bay Company officers. They were in this same Nalron channel but with Canadian and half-breed paddlers. The finish of their journey was such a fiasco that it is said they had to shed their pants in order to run faster in their drawers, after having abandoned all their possessions.



## CHAPTER XI. AN INGLORIOUS RETURN LEADS TO A DISCOVERY

Flight through the woods. — Sufferings and privations. — We make a raft. — The Eskimos again. — A charming spot. — The Kfwi-kra-djiltchit river. — My young men lose their heads. — The Eskimo lake. — Forced march in the forest. — Richardson's geographical errors. — The Napoleon III channel. — Happy return to the Nalron. — We find the canoe again.

Our return was certainly not a glorious one. For we had abandoned a canoe loaded with provisions to the mercy of the rapacious Eskimos, as well as a tent, bed covers, a bag full of ammunition, tobacco, fish nets, changes of mocassins, etc. Now we had to use our legs to escape from a hardly honourable position which, perilous as it might perhaps have been, had now become lamentable if not burlesque.

Only one thing consoled me in the misfortune into which the defection of my two Denes had plunged me - the knowledge, I have already mentioned, of other expeditions which had miscarried just as badly. I only cited the example of one of these in the last chapter to show that the fears of my Indians were more comprehensible than those of educated whites who were the first in their party to give way to uncontrollable terror at the sight of fierce-looking Eskimos. One must not forget that Sir John Franklin was robbed by these same Chiglit, that they killed Mr. Livingston and his party, and that they pursued and attacked Admiral Back, Sir John Richardson, Pullen and Hooper. One must understand the spirit in which in 1865 I tried the nearly impossible. That I was comparable to Martin, the famous animal trainer who first entered a cage of lions to make a display of their roaring and anger, and that my companion in 1867, two years after my initial success among the Eskimos on the Anderson River, only escaped from them because of his stentorian voice, his intense black eyes and his frantic Celtic energy.

What almost made me despair was the determination of my Indians to abandon canoe and baggage to escape on foot in unknown country, which had hardly re-emerged from the spring flood and was consequently still covered with mud and where there was much practically impenetrable forest.

"But in heaven's name," I called out to them while doing my utmost to catch up with them in order to stop them, "listen. Would it not be better to paddle up that channel in the canoe, hide for a while until the Eskimos are far off and then calmly work our way back to the Mackenzie? That way we will put on a reasonable show. What will the Loucheux and your relatives and the whites say when they learn of this shameful retreat?"

But I might as well have addressed the trees. Neither of them would listen to me.

"The river, save ourselves on the river! Aren't the Eskimos all expert boatmen? Aren't their kayaks swifter than our canoe? Aren't we in their country which we do not know?"

"Did I pretend to teach them, woodsmen who at least by repute knew the shaven heads better than I did? I had better follow them quietly or they would do without me."

That was the reply I received. So, gritting my teeth in silence and accepting my fate, I had to take my part in this unreasonable, mad flight.

I will not describe the sufferings that awaited me in the pathless forests which were still wet from the recent flood. I will not go into details about our bodies drenched with rain, covered with mud, torn by the thorns and twigs of raspberry bushes and wild roses, and devoured by clouds of mosquitoes and flies. It was a long trip with sleep in the open air without a tent, without bedding or even a coat. We crossed rivers and channels, swimming or on rafts. There were swamps where we sank to mid-thigh, spruce trees which we climbed to find the best way ahead. We spent sleepless nights in anxiety and days scouting the way ahead and going astray twenty times in three days, all at a great distance from any inhabited place, from any civilized being.

Well, however humiliating the events of my third Arctic expedition, I still think them worth retelling for the possible interest of travellers, friends of geographical discovery and those of religion. The account of our misery will show them the extent and constancy of my efforts to instruct and civilize the wild Eskimos.

At first I followed my two Indians at the run across a wet spruce forest with tall trees, the widely separated trunks of which made it easy to pass between them. As we passed under this dark vault, I kept on calling out to my servants, begging them to slow down, telling them that I could hardly keep up with them. All I could get out of them was that an hour after leaving the canoe they agreed to rest for a few moments in order to talk over what had best be done.

"It is useless," I told them, "to keep going ever deeper into the forest for the Eskimos will never go into it more than a hundred yards or so from the shore. So let's rest here till mid-day and then return to the shore to see what has happened to our canoe. If it is there, we will use it to make our way back."

In view of our circumstances and their foolishness in abandoning and leaving the canoe, this was the best plan. But the two youths rejected it without properly considering it. The running and the acceleration of their blood had so augmented their panic they could not close an eye, and thought all the time they could hear Eskimos at their heels. While I was bathed in perspiration from our headlong

run, they were trembling with cold and fear and they urged that we must continue to make our way to the east.

"We shall not be safe" said Yenawetlun "until we have crossed this muddy river and have reached the higher ground which borders it at a distance."

I was willing to cross the river, but why we should go as far as the Caribou Hills, a sandy range to the east of the Mackenzie delta, was something I could not understand. What was the point?

As I could not persuade them to make a fire, I had to follow them further for they were shivering and wanted to keep moving. We wandered about for another half an hour looking for a ford. The little river was so tortuous we did not advance at all but almost turned back on ourselves. Finally, we resolved to make a raft, but how? We had no rope to tie its components together.

Searching my pockets, I found a ball of string. We doubled it and it was just long enough to hold one layer of poles that we lined up together in the water. On these we placed another layer at right angles and each took a long pole to steer our floating platform and embarked.

But we did not travel far; the logs that made up our raft were too short - they swayed and suddenly we were in the water up to our belts, our legs in the black mud up to the knee. What trouble we had to pull our legs out of the mire and at the same time to keep our ammunition, food and guns out of the water.

Caught like ducks in a decoy, dirty as water buffaloes, and loaded down by our wet clothes, we were about to rebuild our raft when we heard loud voices not far off.

"Tsitle, tsitle, Mitchi Pitchitork."

It was the Eskimos searching for us.

Flurried, my two Indians picked up their guns, left the raft in the water and made all speed into the forest to escape the Eskimos who were approaching by boat.

It seemed too humiliating as well as rash to me, after our escape had shown we were afraid of them, to wait for the Eskimos and put myself alone at their mercy.

So I followed my Hareskins, who this time ran so fast and so far that we never heard the voices of the Eskimos any more.

As I insisted absolutely that we head south to reach the shore of the river at the head of the delta instead of going uselessly to the

east, we built another raft with larger pieces of wood in the evening. This time the structure, though hardly more solid than the first, held together and allowed us to cross the small but deep and muddy river, which was no other than the Kfwi-kra-djiltchit or Onion River.

After working our way eastwards through the forest for another half an hour, in spite of my efforts to persuade the savages to take another direction, we arrived at a most charming spot. It was a spacious prairie covered with a short turf spattered with the golden petals of buttercups, shrubs with yellow flowers and the silvery corollas of the flowers of the grass of parnassus. Its oval shape, its raised edges bordered by the forest and a small clear stream which wandered through the flowery pasture showed that this prairie was a dried up former lake.

Nothing so much resembled the poetic picture of the swan of Mantua [Virgil] at this pleasant spot.

Aquae strepentis vitreus ambit liquor  
Sulcoque ductus irrigat rivus sata:  
Flores nitescent discolore gramine,  
Pinguntque terras gemmeis honoribus.

The noisy, glassy water circulates  
and drawn through furrows the stream moistens sown fields:  
flowers begin to shine, the turf changes colour  
and they bedeck the land like jewels.

As soon as we got to this little paradise, I lay down to sleep, telling my companions we would rest here for some hours to dry out our clothes. But they made an outcry. Surrounded by enemies as we were, so they said, they had sworn not to sleep till they reached the mountain called Kwatledi from which they could get their bearings.

I had a compass with me, but they did not understand the use of that instrument.

They put no trust in my words, answering that a white man has no sense in the woods. All I could get out of them was that they agreed to rest for an hour. After that I had to resign myself to follow them, for they had the provisions, however made their idea that we should go to the east.

I ate a piece of raw dried meat, but they could not swallow a mouthful for they were still seeing imaginary enemies all around.

At the eastern edge of the prairie the little brook we had seen ran into the dry bed of a river. At the spring thaw that river must be wide and deep and transform the prairie into a pond. It offered us a natural route towards higher ground, which we followed, until

sleep, fatigue and the heat overcame us and we had to throw ourselves down among the rocks which were scattered along the dry river bed.

That is how our first day and night in the wilds were passed.

When I woke up my watch showed nine o'clock. But there was a problem - was it nine in the morning or evening? As the sun remains above the horizon all the time at that latitude at that season, it was difficult to be sure. My servants discussed the question. One of them maintained it was nine in the evening and we had only slept an hour; the other was just as sure it was morning and that we had snored away eight hours.

I checked with my compass. The sun was in the northeast, so it was nine in the morning. We had had a long sleep and felt refreshed by the tranquility of the place where we had spent the night. In saying night I am wrong, but how is one to express oneself when speaking of an area where there is continuous light?

We had soon dispatched a breakfast of raw dried meat. As my companions were still persuaded that we must travel to the east, we continued once more in the bed of the dried water course and somewhat before mid-day reached its source. It was another charming spot which would have delighted Robinson Crusoe, a hermit or a hunter.

It was a patch of prairie again, but four times the size of the one we had crossed the day before. There was also a lake, still and silvery, which reflected a belt of tall spruce interrupted by poplars and willows with glittering leaves. Willow shrubs also emerged here and there from the blue waters on which several families of goldeneye and harlequin ducks were floating. These birds showed the tameness of creatures undisturbed by man and floated calmly as if they were the guardian spirits of this pretty place.

The spectacle rested my eyes and rejoiced my soul. Even my savages, who lived mainly on the desolate steppes around Great Bear Lake, were not impervious to its charm.

"Truly, what beautiful country," they called out.

I wanted to draw their attention to the possibility of securing a succulent breakfast from the waterfowl on the lake. But I could not persuade them to fire a single shot. It would have been extremely imprudent to shoot according to them.

"Do you want to attract the Eskimos?" they asked in a reproachful tone.

The Eskimos - they were far from us at that moment and no longer thought of following us.

Leaving the beautiful lake to the right, we crossed the prairie, which was quite wet. There were two inches of water over much of it and we soon found ourselves in the woods again. The river bed we had been following did not continue far beyond the lake and the terrain became hilly and dry, and between the scattered conifers there was heather and lichens. The tree trunks here showed no trace of the spring flood which annually transforms the whole Mackenzie delta.

All at once we came upon the remains of a Loucheux camp site: footprints on the turf, poplar poles chewed by beavers and beaver bones, calcined, in the remains of old fires or blanched by boiling.

"Do you know where we are, my sons?" I asked.

"No, we certainly do not. Do you?"

"Yes, I know. We have been following the Onion River and have just gone around the lake at its head, and this string of lagoons you see here will lead us in a fairly short time to the Eskimo Lake. But after all, where did you expect to get to by making for the east?"

"I want to get to my own country," said Jean-Marie imperturbably. "It is over there - from the height of land we will see it."

The poor lad was wandering from the question.

"Over there," I told him, "we shall get straight to the Eskimo lake. Your country is quite far from here to the south, poor lad. When are you going to believe me?"

"Well, let's just get up on the mountain. From there we will see."

"There is absolutely no mountain in this area. The Kroteylorok or Caribou Hills are merely sandy hills, dunes if you will, and they only begin farther north than where we are. Between the Mackenzie and the Eskimo Lake there is no mountain and no higher ground than the plateau we are now on. As for me," I added, "I shan't go any farther. However much I like to discover places, I have no business to get lost around the Eskimo Lake, which is not far away."

"Well, it makes sense. But you, how do you know a piece of country you have never seen?"

"Because I take careful note of the land I pass through. I always ask the natives about the topography of their country. Sida-Jen made a map of this part of the Mackenzie for me, together with Edjil'i, who also knows it."

"So we are in Loucheux country here?"

"In borderline country, but more Loucheux than Eskimo. It was Loucheux who broke up the beaver lodges near this camp site last April. I heard about it at Tsi-kka-tchig."

The two young savages carefully examined all the footprints, the sweepings and discards about the abandoned camp site. There could be no doubt, we were on ground some Loucheux had worked over and in which they had not left a single beaver. My companions could not contain their joy and resumed their eastward course. The ground continually rose as we went on.

"But for heaven's sake, where do you want to get to?" I told them, rather incensed by now. "Do you want to go and perish by the Eskimo Lake?"

"We shall climb the Kwatledi mountain and we shall follow it to Tsi-kka-tchig."

"Are you mad? I tell you, there are no mountains here. So why travel across forests when our canoe awaits us on the shore of one of the Mackenzie River channels, which we can follow upstream in all security." I pointed to the southwest. "That is the only route to follow, to the southwest lies the river."

"How do you know which is southwest when the sun turns over our heads night and day?"

"I can tell by this little instrument which shows directions and is never wrong - the compass."

They shook their heads in doubt and discouragement.

"Enough of this foolishness," I said. "We are on the watershed here; let one of you climb a spruce. He will see the Rockies over there, and in the opposite direction he will probably see the Eskimo Lake."

"We have climbed a tree twenty times and never discovered anything. All the same, here goes," said Yenawetloun, and was soon in the top of the tallest spruce nearby.

"I cannot see the Mackenzie," he called out, "I can only see forest stretching far, far away. But way over there, low on the horizon, I can make out the toothed chain of the Rockies. They are pale and shining but very far off; one can only just make them out."

"Now you can see what you gained by being so headstrong, and what do you see in the other direction?"

"There are mountains in this direction too, but they are not high, a bit further off to the north, But behind them in the east I

can see other isolated conical mountains [the Pingoos of the area] and also the sea or at least a big lake."

"The Eskimo Lake," I cried. "I want to see it as well." And I too climbed the tree.

The Indian's description was exact and my eyes added nothing to the picture, so immense were the horizons. The Eskimo Lake lay in front of us to the northeast; the lower part of the river, the Natowdja, which flows into it, was visible too. As well as two or three long points projecting into the lake, and on the left the hillocks Kija and Voekkrag-ekke-nitrin; but it was impossible for me to form an idea of the size of the lake as its eastern extremity was invisible to me, for it was lost in the bluish haze which rose from the waters. All the same, I am convinced this system of lakes has nothing like the dimensions attached to it by the English navigators.

"You can see," I said to Jean-Marie, "the course of the Mackenzie below that of the Rockies. That furrow in the forest shows the line of the river we followed on the left to get here. Well, we must return down there. The Eskimos will be far away by now. I shall go in that direction alone if need be, whether you want to come or not."

As I said this, I climbed down from the tree, put one of the packets of dried meat which Jean-Marie had been carrying, on my back and started to retrace my steps. My resolution disconcerted the other two. But as I had kept my head on the day when they had lost theirs, I judged it time to assert my superiority. I had followed them long enough. Yenawetloun still obstinately wanted to follow to high ground. Klele wanted to follow him because, he being a native, would know more than I did, so he said, in the woods.

"Alright," I said, "you have meat and a gun. Go wherever you like."

When they saw me determined to go without them, following the course of my compass, they took my advice after all.

I headed southwest toward our canoe near the mouth of the small river where we had left it.

At first my companions, as if to assure themselves that I knew what I was doing, followed behind. But, as had happened to me on many occasions, as soon as they saw me advance resolutely and without hesitation, they did not want to acknowledge their incapacity, and Yenawetloun bravely put himself at the head of our line, while Klele, his gun over his arm, brought up the rear.

Thus we marched from two in the afternoon until ten in the evening without stopping to rest for more than a few minutes once or twice. At



ten the clouds which the heat had gathered unloaded an abundant cold rain on us; as we were already bathed in perspiration, we could well have done without it.

The rain forced us to stop. We found shelter of sorts under a huge spruce and bedded down at its foot without having found fuel for a fire. I shall not detail our sufferings during that night. We were drenched by the rain, our legs and feet soaked by water from the grasslands, we were devoured by myriads of mosquitoes, against which neither mosquito nets nor covers were an effective defence. We could only sleep in snatches which did not refresh and were soon interrupted.

Before continuing, I must correct here a serious error on maps of North America issued since the expedition of Sir John Franklin in 1826 and before my expedition of 1869.

In the report of Doctor Richardson,<sup>10</sup> who was a member of the Franklin expedition and who explored the coast of the Arctic Ocean to the east of the Mackenzie, one finds the description of an immense lake which the doctor calls Eskimo Lake and to which he attributes colossal dimensions.

I translate:

"Considering as correct the information we received from natives (no doubt he meant his interpreter, Baptiste Boucher), and according to what we could estimate from our own observations, the Eskimo Lake is a vast and very strange collection of waters. The Indians say it reaches to within four days' march of Fort Good Hope and the Eskimos tell us it stretches from Point Encounter as far as Cape Bathurst, giving it a length of over 114 miles from north to south and 185 miles from east to west"

(Relation of a journey from Montreal to the Arctic Sea, 1825, by Sir John Franklin, p. 228.)

Sir John Richardson adds that he believes the waters of Browel Cove (70°N, 132°29'W of Paris) flow from this gigantic basin, of which he considers Hutchinson and Mackinley Bays and Russell Inlet further outflows into the sea. Yet he assures us that Eskimo Lake is a basin of fresh water! According to the information of his interpreter, Baptiste Boucher, this paradoxical lake thus extends from the mouth of the Mackenzie to the Anderson River, then still unknown, and communicates with the sea without losing its fresh water quality. A real phenomenon! [The waters of the Eskimo Lakes are brackish but to so slight an extent that lake trout occur there.]

On this basis the maps since the time of the expedition show in dotted outline this fabulous Eskimo Lake.

Yet twenty-two years later, in August 1848, no doubt on the representation of competent geographers and hydrographers, Doctor Richardson retracted what he had stated in 1826 (Arctic Searching Expedition 1850, Vol. 1, p. 250).

"If I had been able to convince myself that the isolated peaks which I saw from Point Encounter, from which one can see conical peaks thrusting themselves up, were really islands, I could have thought that I was on the edge of the great Eskimo Lake, which is shown as a reported feature on Sir John Franklin's map, but which I now believe does not exist."

"The Indians on whose reports we based the indication of this lake probably meant to indicate some inlet of Liverpool Bay, which lies far to the west."

This is worse than what Sir John had written in 1826. It would have been enough if he had asked a Loucheux Indian to draw for him the configuration of the shores of Eskimo Lake, for him to have made the real discovery of this beautiful lake, of its river and the natural channel of which I spoke. No Indian knows so little of his own country that he cannot draw a satisfactory chart sufficient for an educated European to find the places it indicates.

Richardson had climbed a hill from which it seemed to him he could make out a sort of channel or arm of the sea, or even a great lake. He could not be sure which of these it was. He preferred to believe it was a mirage and simply to deny the existence of an Eskimo Lake rather than to consult the natives more fully. It did not even occur to him that he might have misunderstood his interpreter, which was indeed the case.

All this shows up Richardson's authoritarian and affected character, so different in its superficiality and lack of scrutiny from the usual English type. It has made him commit a number of blunders which appear in his book.

Mr. MacFarlane, the founder of Fort Anderson, knew of the existence of a natural channel or *ikaratsark* or navigable salt water between one of the mouths of the Mackenzie and the mouth of the Anderson River. He even planned to use it as a supply route for Fort Anderson if only the Eskimos had been a more reliable, less perfidious people. I even believe that he visited this channel, but this I cannot be sure of. In November 1865 I had assurance of its existence. The Chiglit Eskimos who arrived at Noulloumallok's village on the lower Anderson came from the Mackenzie by this natural passage and took no more than ten days to travel the distance between the estuary of the two rivers, and Eskimos are poor walkers.

This channel or *ikaratsark*, which I have named after Napoleon III, has several openings into the sea, which means that Nicholson Island

is really an archipelago composed of several islands formed by branches of this channel.

Richardson remarks that he seemed to detect a current at the mouth of Hutchinson Bay, and this is not surprising. The Bay is opposite a large river to which I have given the name Wiseman River, which flows into the Napoleon III channel.

It is, therefore, this channel which Richardson saw from the top of the hill, Kroteylorok, and which in spite of the evidence of his eyes he affected later to have been a mirage. Is it comprehensible? As to Eskimo Lake, he could not have seen it from there - it is too far from the Arctic Ocean. But that was no reason to deny what he saw.

Apart from the Wiseman, the Napoleon III channel also receives a distributary of the Anderson, the L'etlen nillen or river of the end of the world, which I saw in 1865, as well as the Natowdja, as wide as the Mackenzie, which brings to it, by a direct course, the water of Eskimo Lake.

By the river Kfwi-kra-djilchit of which I spoke earlier in this chapter, one can reach the western extremity of Eskimo Lake in two days, where the Natowdja enters the lake. I have called the Kfwi-kra-djilchit after Mr. Onion, an officer of the Hudson's Bay Company who had visited its confluence with the Mackenzie and planned to establish a Fort there.

As to Eskimo Lake, which we could see clearly from the height of land, its real name is Sitidji [Sitidgi on modern maps] in Loucheux. I do not know what the Eskimos call it. I doubt that they frequent it and I even suspect that Richardson invented the name of the Béroullè-déssè. The chain of hills which surrounds the lake to the east and to the north, the Ohyin (the dam), also follows the Natowdja towards the sea. After leaving the lake, this river is not over thirty geographical leagues in length. As to the lake, the Loucheux assured me it took three days of canoeing to cover its length, which would make it about 99 km or 25 miles long.

The surrounding country is quite barren, being covered with lichens and heather. Between its western extremity and the little Onion River there is a series of four or five ponds inhabited by beavers between which the Loucheux portage their canoes.

At the mouth of the Natowdja, at Point Encounter where Franklin was pillaged in 1825, lies the Eskimo village, Tchenerark (the workshop), a place of rendezvous of the Chiglit Eskimos in August. They gather there to hunt white whales, which are attracted to the fresh water there by the abundance of fish.

The Eskimos compare the four mouths of the Mackenzie, which they name Kour-vik or Great River, to the fingers of the hand. Hence, this

part of Napoleon III channel which separates Richard's Island (Tounounark, Caribou Land) from the mainland is called Koublou-oyark, the thumb.

This is all the information I was able to gather from my Eskimo companions before we separated. The Loucheux, Ikllatchi, Kotsedinttchou and Sida-Jen, told me what relates to Lake Sitidji and its environments.

I will now return to my two young Indians whom we have left asleep in the rain in the forests by the Onion River.

From the height of land where we had seen the lake and the Natowdja, we had already marched several hours when, as already related, the storm forced us to take shelter.

A fourth sun shone on our sufferings next morning. The weather was fine again but cold as it can only be after a rain brought over from the Arctic Ocean. We took a quick breakfast and resumed our march toward the Mackenzie, across lagoons where beaver had left evident traces of their occupation. The landscape throughout was charming - a veritable paradise such as I would never have expected so near the sea.

We had left the dry river by which we had ascended to the height of land on our right. My servants, putting a little faith in the compass, climbed trees up to twenty-five times a day to make sure the route I made them follow was right. The last time they climbed one we were beside a pretty lake elongated like a bayou. They called out that they saw a long channel bordered by grass and farther off some very tall spruce. What could it be? No doubt another lake or one of the meanderings of the Onion River, but this channel ran across our route while the small river took a direct and fairly short course parallel to our route.

When we reached this channel, we were surprised to find still water. I suggested it must be an old eastern channel of the Mackenzie which had become blocked off by sediment or closed off by beavers.

We made a raft and traversed this piece of water without trouble and arrived in the afternoon, weakened by fatigue, on the bank of the east channel. But now we were sure of our route and delivered from that anxiety which grips the heart of a traveller in entirely unknown country.

We lit a fire beside a clear stream and dined off a grey goose I knocked down with my gun and took a very necessary rest, lying in the sun after having washed and dried our things, which were dirty with mud and in a pitiable state. The foot gear of my Indian servants was in shreds.

Next day, on June 18th, we went to look for my canoe. I shall not retell the fears of my Denes when we arrived on the spot. But thank God, the canoe was still there. The Eskimos who had looked it over in our absence had even been good enough to tie it to the shore, thinking we would return. They had also reduced its burden by taking everything that took their fancy. They had taken most of my provisions, the tent, the nets, cooking utensils, bed covers and my mosquito net. They had taken the hinges and every bit of metal off my handbag. They had left of its contents only the things they considered "medicine," such as my breviary, all the objects of religious cult, my writings in their language (for which I bless them with all my heart), my diary, some tea and a little flour.

As we had enough dried meat and in the bottom of the canoe found some wet and muddy but untorn mocassins, we could easily effect our return. The islands of the delta furnished us with an abundance of eggs, we killed waterfowl and even a beaver. But Klele killed it outright with his shot and it sank like a lump of lead. Later some Loucheux we met along the river sold us some fish.

It was these that gave me information about the Eskimo Lake and the Natowdja River.

On June 29th at eight in the morning we got back to Fort Good Hope. At that point I resolved to restrict my attempts to evangelize the Inuit to the occasions of their visits to Fort MacPherson, until they had got to know us better and to esteem us more; until we could win their confidence so that we would no longer be considered spies to be followed, distrusted and pillaged like enemies.

## CHAPTER XII. ARVIOUNA

Arviouna's family. — His youthful exploits. — His physical and moral portrait. — Artistic genius of the Inuit. — His obstinate character. — His propensity to "murder." — His sensitivity. — Tchia-wetlo's unforeseen death. — Immorality and impiety of young Eskimos.

Under this heading, I shall summarize in a few lines my appraisal of a young Eskimo who on July 11, 1870, on my return from Alaska, attached himself to me and whom I took with me to my home at Fort Good Hope and kept there until the autumn of that year.

I present him as a specimen Eskimo. As he was my pupil, my guest who shared my meals for two months while he taught me Eskimo, I could study him at leisure.

Neither the protagonists of "natural man" nor the partisans of Darwinian progressivism can claim that my specimen was a fully developed man devoured by passions, lost to vice and stamped by the scars of crimes, for Arviouna was a boy of fourteen or fifteen, son of a chief who had died of the measles in 1865. He had been raised by his aunt, the wife of Tsapoutaytok, another chief. He had received no religious notions and had been kept from the bad example of his compatriots by the Hareskin interpreter of Fort MacPherson, Joseph Tchia-wetlo (lazy boy).

Now compare this child with any of our young peasants - not with the gutter snipes of the big cities who are no better than Eskimos - and you can tell me whether the supposed natural man is to be admired and above all whether he is superior to a Christian.

Arviouna (the whaler) belonged to the Tareormeout, or people of the sea, who live west of the mouth of the Mackenzie. Orphaned at the age of ten, his uncle's wife had taken him in and raised him.

At twelve he was to have his cheeks perforated for the insertion of the labrets, as well as his ear cartilage, an operation which would have raised him to the status of a warrior. He had such apprehension of this painful operation that he ran away from his adoptive family and sought refuge with the interpreter, Tchia-wetlo, refusing all further contact with his compatriots.

"Had I returned to them," he said, "they would have pierced my cheeks and ears. It was better to leave my relatives."

During the summer of 1870 Tchia-wetlo had to be away from MacPherson to travel to Fort Simpson. He gladly confided his protegee to me and was to pick him up on his return in the fall at Good Hope. It was a good opportunity for me to continue work on my Eskimo dictionary, to translate some prayers and hymns into that language and to obtain lessons in it which I could not do at MacPherson.

This young man's fear of the operation, to which all Eskimo males submit courageously, surprised me, for Arviouna was no coward. At nine he had proved himself a warrior by running his knife through the shoulder of another boy of his age. Arviouna in turn had been stabbed in the left breast by his comrade and he proudly showed me the scar.

What were his other youthful exploits? He made sure not to reveal them to me. He had this in common with free thinkers - he did not consider himself to blame for any fault, and at the same time he wanted everyone to be at his feet.

"What do you mean by sin?" he often said to me. "I do not know what it is. As to myself, I have never committed one."

When I began an enumeration of the errors into which we all fall so often, evil thoughts, acts of uncontrolled anger, lewdness, intemperance, quarrels, making game of others, theft, fornication and other more serious ones which are the daily bread of these poor pagans, Arviouna had no reply.

"Nalouiyounha, I do not know anything about it," he repeated, while changing color and looking scared. Then all at once he took off.

In appearance he was plump and corpulent, as the Inuit generally are, and broad-shouldered. His neck was short and thick, the head rather square. His legs were straight and well muscled, the hands and feet extraordinarily small - all the indications of a Herculean temperament. His walk was not dragging like an Indian's, or loose like a Negro's, but easy, noble and alert like a European's. To see this unpretentious child walk, one would have said a trim infantryman, full of resolution and energy.

Energy, yes, he certainly had that.

As to his youthful charms, they did not in any way suggest an admixture of European blood in his ancestry. They were all purely Asiatic. He had skin the color of café au lait with that slight reddish infusion which these people get at twelve or thirteen years old, small sparkling black eyes set obliquely but not looking at all wicked, with that swelling of the lower eyelid which characterizes the Eskimo race, that vicious swelling about the eye<sup>11</sup> which in Paris is seen only in the class of people that haunts Saint-Lazare. His mouth, though wide and not disfigured by the openings for the labrets (toutait), was neither gaping nor pendulous as in adults of his people, and his teeth had not been filed. Black hair tufted like the teeth of a harrow was cut square across his eyebrows as in a Russian mujik, covering a slightly sloping forehead which narrowed towards the top, a sign of obstinacy and degradation.

There was certainly some ugliness in this moon-shaped face. I found it difficult to consider him a handsome lad unless a smile, that

ray of sunshine on a human face, lit it up. However, just because of the roundness of his wide face, Arviouna was looked on as a handsome boy by the Hareskins of Good Hope, because in their eyes a round face is the ultimate in beauty. Why not? Was not Hogarth of the same opinion? The curved line, he says in his *Analysis of Beauty*, is characteristic of the beautiful. What more curved than the circumference of a circle? That describes Arviouna's appearance.

I kept him with me to deepen my studies in the Eskimo language while sounding out the religious disposition of a member of this people who are unbelievers by instinct. With this double aim in view, I treated him much more favorably than the Hareskins and other Indians in my service. I asked for no work from him beyond two hour's of lessons in Eskimo a day, one in the morning, the other in the evening. He always went through it with manifest reluctance. He ate the same food as we did, in the same vessels and at the same table, but after us. In this country that is an honour bestowed only on breeds of part-European origin or Canadian or European servants. The full blood natives always eat in the kitchen the food which they prepare themselves.

While he was with us, Arviouna never lacked anything. He never felt hunger, cold or fatigue. We did not restrain him in any way and placed no obstacle in the way of his freedom, and though he had never worked, we dressed him in new clothes when he left.

On his side, he was easy, gracious, forthcoming, impudent even and pestering as all spoiled children and all his dear compatriots are. As for the rest, he was an insupportable child, a real mosquito as the Hareskins put it, meaning to convey that importunaceous tenacity, the harassing begging, the incessant demands of the Eskimos, the never-ending songs, the dances and grimaces with which they pester you like a mosquito pesters a person to give that which he cannot and does not want to give, his blood.

Erakhe kkwi lakhintte: the Eskimos are like mosquitoes. No saying has ever given a better picture of the demanding, pestering and irritating character of a people.

Laziness is the major fault of the savage. All his vices stem from it. A laborious savage has hardly any faults - he is a stoic. But the Eskimos are lazy in their own way. They spare no energy when working for themselves; on the other hand, they will not lend themselves to work for others - that is, labour. In other words, they are lazy out of egoism, not by nature, while the redskin is so thoroughly lazy he would rather do without necessities instead of working for them.

We could not get Arviouna to do any work. When one tried to give him some task for which he would have been rewarded, he went to look for Basil Tsiontran, our youngest servant. Basil was a Loucheux of Arviouna's age and, like him, the son of a chief.



Arviouna, in a mixed jargon he had invented, said to him, "Tchiglerk (fellow), you will do this for me, understand?"

And when Basil balked, having already been given his own job to do, the Eskimo lad would say, "Oh, you do not want to do it? Take that then, and that."

He would seize Basil by the hair and throw him down, put his knee on his chest and strike him until the little Loucheux agreed to his wishes.

We often came across Basil weeping, lamenting in discouragement. In reply to our questions, he always said, "Anakren tsell se dhelr'en! The little excrementer has killed me!"

But he never came to us of his own to complain.

I often had to threaten to send Arviouna away if he went on "killing" his comrade. The effect of my reprimand was that he would mend his ways for a few days, then it would start all over again. Basil, that gentle child, had no defense but tears against Arviouna's blows.

As to work, Arviouna, quite apart from this, would not take on any. When ordered to do the least little job for the household, he always had the same reply ready.

"I am no slave. I am a man (tchiglerk) like you whites. Give that order to that louse-ridden Basil."

Once he had expressed the motive of his refusal, he became as obstinate as a mule about it and nothing could change his mind about it.

One should not, however, imagine that Arviouna was not busy. He worked continually, but for himself, according to his tastes, his aptitudes and Eskimo ideas. He did what he had seen his compatriots do, though he had no hope nor any desire of returning to them for fear of having his cheeks and ears pierced.

Now he would look for nails and old bits of metal around the houses and gather his finds in a bag. At other times he picked up screws and files from the workshop and hasten to add these to his treasure. Then again he would make arrows and forge spearheads, or again he might be making a pipe, a bow or a tobacco box.

And when I teased him, "But Arviouna look, what are you spending your time on? Who on earth here would think of using these weapons of another time and of another era?"

"Shush Ayontey (uncle), shush. What I am doing is not useless. These things are for selling to the lousy ones."

By this he meant the Dene and the Loucheux, who were infinitely less louse-ridden than he was.

To do business was his only thought and preoccupation. My Indians who were mostly clumsy, marvelled at his skill and very soon he had some orders. They wanted him to make arrowheads, leaden or wood carved pipe bowls, the women ordered work boxes. For the Dene, his products were real curiosities and Arviouna was repaid in old nails, tobacco, glass beads, caribou skin mocassins and other useful things.

We let him be, as that seemed to be his style.

On his modest skill, he based his sense of superiority over the other natives in matters of genius and art. He took on an air of importance which did not please us in a child. Involuntarily I thought of the little twelve to thirteen year old Yankees I had seen on the Mississippi steamboats, cigar in mouth, hand on hip, strutting like conquerors, who were on their way to distant farms to make a living and "to make money."

Arviouna held his own against us as if he had been thirty years old. He argued, he refused without showing any more fear or deference than if we had been his equals. When his desires, often absurd, were opposed, I have seen him weep sometimes, but these were the tears of frustrated rage. I only saw him cry from fear once, and that was when he experienced some slight indisposition. In such a case, which an Indian endures with a stoicism which suggests insensibility, Arviouna was desolate. He shed hot tears and begged that he be cured quickly, but quickly, right away.

Such are all Eskimos in such circumstances.

I mentioned that Arviouna was given the leftovers of our meals while the good and gentle Basil grilled or boiled his own meat or fish which was given him for his meals. This differential treatment, which the Eskimo boy did not deserve, should have earned his appreciation, but it merely made him more pretentious and demanding. He was convinced he owed this honour to the superiority of his race and the nobility of his rank as son of a chief.

By accident it happened one day that the meal served at our frugal table was less abundant than usual and there was nothing left over for Arviouna. When we had eaten he was therefore given a piece of raw meat and told to cook it himself. In his own country it would have been eaten with gusto as it was. But Arviouna thought he was being despised. He refused the meat with a high and mighty air, and in a fine movement of noble indignation he flung it into a corner and threw himself on his bed muttering, "My relatives shall hear of this."

This threat was the ultimate in fatuity for he was thirty leagues from his people, alone among strangers who, according to native mores, could have enslaved him. Oh, he knew well enough whom he was talking to.

Seeing himself, as he thought, despised, he started to cry. From weeping he went on to shouting and from shouting to blows. He went into one of these fits of unspeakable rage which one sees among lunatics and the Eskimos, kicking at the doors and partitions, howling, purple with rage.

Unfortunately, such a show put on by a child excited our hilarity rather than fear or commiseration. We laughed but let him carry on at will without touching him or telling him off.

Tired of the struggle, Arviouna turned to Basil, who was preparing his meal.

"Kreymirk (dog), look here. Cook my meat."

The Indian naturally refused, whereupon my Eskimo lad took him by the hair, flung him down and started kicking him. At the cries of the little Loucheux, we ran back into the kitchen and saw the Eskimo dancing on his belly and vociferating. He was beside himself and looked quite hideous.

To take him by the ears and to give him two slaps (only on this occasion) and to push him onto his bed were matters of an instant. The tears and the clamor began again as strong as ever, accompanied by drumming on the doors and walls. We left him alone.

Suddenly he appeared at the door of my room, where I was writing.

"Ayontey (my uncle), I am going to leave."

I must say here in parentheses that he never wanted to call me father. That title, he said, belonged only to Joseph Tchia-wetlo, who had adopted him. He could go no further, he added, than to call me uncle. He was stiff in his attitude, the little lad.

"Ayontey, I want to leave."

"Well then, go."

"But I want to go for good, far, very far, and never return."

"Well then, that is understood. You go for good, very far away, and you will not return."

"You will not follow me?"

"Certainly not. You are master of your own acts. You showed it by dancing on your comrade's belly, you bad lot."

"Oh, he is a lousy one, he is not a man."

"Enough of insults. You want to go, well then go."

Arviouna made a parcel of his possessions, gathering his bag of treasures of metal, his bow and quiver, and without saying goodbye he went straight to the Fort, a mere three hundred paces from our house.

From time to time he looked back to see whether I showed signs of running after him to hold him back. Seeing that this was not the case, the poor lad came back pitifully. He installed himself in our kitchen again and once more began his banging and knocking. There was no response to his spiteful appeal of anger and injured egoism. Neither laughter, threats nor remonstrances - nothing but silence.

An hour later Arviouna, after having himself roasted his meat and after having eaten well, came back to my room smiling and singing. He sat down beside my work table and said in the softest, wheedling tone, "Uncle, kraleouyartowouk, let the two of us work at writings."

He had come to give me a lesson in Eskimo after having received one in how to behave. There was no allusion to the recent outburst. I did not mention it and acted as if nothing had happened.

From that day on Arviouna was tamed, but he no longer ate at our table from my plate after us. He was given his meat or raw fish like Basil and, like him, prepared his own meals.

Very playful as his compatriots are, Arviouna was looked on favorably by all and was certainly treated by the Dene and Loucheux with much more goodwill and affection than he showed them. He was pitied for his isolation, his youthfulness and his orphan status. Religion has softened the hard-heartedness of the Indians to that degree.

Far from recognizing and appreciating this kind attitude, the lad attracted general ill-will by his shamelessness, his attacks on females, his sharp sarcastic jokes, his unwanted pranks and sometimes actual injuries to others. His immorality became notorious; he would incite children of his own age and the young folk into scuffles which could have become bloody. In short, after a few days he was called nothing but Enakhe tsinte, the wicked little excrementer.

One day he forgot himself seriously in regard to a white-haired Canadian who liked him - a very strong man who could have pulverized him. The Canadian was busy at the Fort planing and dovetailing some boards for a wall partition when Arviouna came to see him in his workshop.

Like a real Eskimo mosquito, the boy teased and plagued the man, fiddled with his tools and tried them out. The good man told him to leave the tools alone. Instead of obeying, the Eskimo lad picked up a hooked knife and set to hacking at the edges of the boards which

had already been prepared. The workman's ill humour is readily understood. He gave the young man a slap and was about to put him out of the workshop but the Eskimo went into one of his purple rages - he picked up the knife again and tried to stab the Canadian in the belly. The latter only got rid of the mad little fellow by barricading himself inside his workshop. After that, Arviouna spoke of his former friend, the Canadian Jerome Saint-Georges de Laporte, only as that "very wicked man."

Another time I saw my protegee in a dispute with two Hareskins of twenty-five. In spite of his mere fourteen years, he held his own against them. They wanted no more than to see the spectacle of his powerless anger, held him at arm's length, played with him, neither striking nor taunting him. Arviouna went into an inconceivable rage. Fended off, he flung himself at them again as if he would devour them. He uttered harsh inarticulate cries of anger, rising to a frenzy, then he searched his pockets for a knife. But the two partners immediately seized his arms and laughed in his face. One should have seen how their laughter, their forbearing out of pity, excited him to hatred, spite and despair. He wept tears mixed with blood out of eyes which looked like those of a tiger. He would have wanted his looks to be iron darts to pierce them.

I had to stop the game of the two Indians for its effects might have been fatal for Arviouna. But they joined the group of those friends of Arviouna's, along with the old Canadian and my own companion, who had once pulled his ears, of those for whom he had thereafter conceived an indelible aversion and grudge.

Anger is certainly the dominant passion of the Eskimos, but it is equalled by their sensitivity, greater than that of the Indians, which is also accompanied by a bigger dose of self-love.

Arviouna's sensitivity burst out when, on the arrival of the boats from Fort Simpson on the following fifth of September, we heard of the sudden death of Joseph Tchia-wetlo, his adopted father. The man had fallen into the river en route to Simpson while steering his boat and had unfortunately drowned. An Eskimo interpreter for many years, he had been influential in the Forts frequented by these people. He had been baptised long ago and was sincerely attached to religion, but he had also made enemies, and his death was attributed to the hatred or vengeance of the Loucheux, as always happens in these cases of unforeseen death.

As soon as Arviouna heard of this sad loss, he started to weep and would not cease lamenting for the whole journey. The Dene blood relations of the deceased were no more affected than he was. I tried to persuade him in vain to stay with us. He rejected the idea of returning to his compatriots for he was determined to keep his cheeks and ears intact and he had also been assured of the patronage of the new post manager at MacPherson, so he left us without regret and even with evident pleasure.

From the moral point of view, this child who was almost a man was no more than an Epicurian. His contact with us only taught him to hide his vices under the mask of hypocrisy. He never insulted our sense of modesty before our eyes, but only for fear of a scolding. He openly condemned the customs and morals of his people and affected a morality which was not in his nature nor appropriate to his age and education. Yet we know from the information of those around us that he was worth no more than the other Eskimos.

When several times I painted pictures of the state to which evil reduces a soul, of the ugliness of vice and the ill effects of maliciousness, of God's goodness, of the punishment which awaited evil-doers at their deaths, and of the benefits in store for the good, etc., his young soul opened out and became tender, his emotion showed on his face and he called in a sort of enthusiasm.

"Uncle, quick baptise me."

But when I told him that before this could be done he must repent of his past life, admit his faults and reform his conduct and decide to live his life as a Christian in future, his face darkened and he replied with a frightened air, "All right, I will listen to you another time."

Or he might say, "Uncle, do not tell me any more of such things. I do not understand them. I do not know what it means to do wrong."

And his mind, afraid of the truth it grasped only too well, withdrew into itself and plunged back to its customary torpor.

Such was Arviouna. He gave us a miniature sketch of what adult Eskimos are like as individuals and as a people. He left us in the same frame of mind as that in which he had come, with the exception of some religious instruction, of which he retained enough to give some account of it in his own language at need. May the seeds of truth he had received have become etched in his young heart, may they be regenerated and brought to bloom.

A host of circumstances prevented me from visiting the Eskimos again between 1870 and 1873, the period when I left Good Hope to return to France. I did not see Arviouna again until September 1876 at Fort Simpson, to which place he had accompanied one of the Company employees from Fort MacPherson, Mr. Murdoch MacLeod. The young man told me that he had become a Christian and was called George, that he had married a young Loucheux girl and had never left MacPherson, where he was the interpreter. He spoke English and Loucheux well enough to interpret between both these languages and Eskimo.

"Unfortunately," he said, "the Loucheux do not like me because I am not circumcised. Uncle, take pity on me; no doubt you have the necessary instruments for this operation. Come circumcise me."

I would not have hesitated to satisfy his wish, for I consider circumcision an excellent measure from the hygienic viewpoint, but we were interrupted by visitors just then and I postponed the operation for the next day, and the next day he left without my seeing him again. Since then I have learned that most of the Chiglit Eskimos have adopted circumcision because of the example of the Loucheux, while making strong representations that Catholic priests be sent among them to instruct them and turn them into Christians.

### CHAPTER XIII. LAST VISIT WITH THE ESKIMOS

Fifth journey to Fort MacPherson. — Little windmills that produce a calm. — Good disposition of the Eskimos. — The great man Tsapoutaytok. — More murders. — The chief Terter. — Systematic opposition of the Christian Loucheux. — Return to Fort Good Hope.

It was 1877 and the 5th of June, six long years that is to say, since my last visit to the Eskimos, when I took a seat in a boat which the Hudson Bay Company district manager was sending to Fort MacPherson in the hope that its load could be taken over the Rockies by the portage between the Rat and Bell Rivers to supply Fort Lapierre. It turned out a vain hope which could not be realized because of the difficult terrain. Eight Hareskins from Good Hope and two Loucheux took their places on board to work it to its first destination by rowing or sailing, and Angus MacDonald, a Scots sailor, seated himself at the helm.

I could have left earlier in a birch bark canoe but I'd been forbidden to do so by my superiors. They did not want to hear talk of my following the Eskimos to their camps. My mission was to consist merely of talking to them at Fort MacPherson in a building which the new head of that post, much more complacent than the former one, would place at my disposal.

Though spring was on its way it was still cold and the mood was sad, a wind blowing from the sea made our passage harder in spite of all the conjurations and exorcisms of the Indians against it. The Loucheux made little wind mills out of bark. The Hareskins made little fishes out of wood which they hung up on fish lines so that the wind should agitate them. These were their "medicines" to conjure the wind and to make it abate. But the wind laughed at their Tibetan-style toys. We did not reach MacPherson until an hour before June 11th.

The place was full of Eskimos. There must have been about 500. I counted 42 large tents and 80 umiaks. Of the Loucheux there were only 150 to 200. The Eskimos had been arriving during the last ten days. Their joy at seeing me again was evident and it was the first time I'd seen them show a little enthusiasm. I was received as eagerly as I usually was by the Hareskins at Good Hope and on Great Bear Lake and by the Loucheux at Fort Anderson and at Tsi-kka-tchig.

They told me they had been expecting me for a long time in the hope I would go down to the sea with them, to build a house of prayer just for them. Oh, if only I had not been absolutely forbidden to fall in with the desires of these poor abandoned ones.

They had changed a lot, these unfortunates, during the six long years of silence on our part. Oh were I but my own master, that I could accompany them and satisfy their hunger for the word of God, their thirst for baptism and instruction.



The only satisfaction I had at MacPherson was to be surrounded for a day and a night (a night of beautiful sunshine in all truth) by Catechumens who had at last decided to embrace religion after plenty of hesitation and after a long period of mockery. Now they asked for explanations of religious pictures, admired the Christian doctrine and told me they did not want Protestant ministers, that they had no confidence except in him who had first visited them. God's moment had come.

To convince me of their truthfulness they spoke with confidence, took me to their sick ones and asked me for medicines. I was touched to the quick and once more regretted the order which forbade me for the time being from satisfying the perfectly legitimate wishes of these people.

Alas, they had been sorely tested. Few of my former friends among them were still alive. Anhoutchinak, Inontakrark, Kroanark and Toulertsen were dead. Kreyouktark, the good, gentle Kreyouktark with all his family, had frozen to death during a terrible famine which had forced them to try to get to Fort MacPherson for food. The same snow-fall had covered all six of them, the whole family. Navikan too was dead, as was Nakoyork. But the brother of the great chief, Tsapoutaytok, tattooed across his nose like his brother and a better warrior than the deceased, had succeeded him in his functions as Innoktoyok, great man.

This chief with his face like that of Francis I, came to see me twice. He put on great airs, acting like a lord which Navikan, wicked as he had been, had not done. He asked was I not going to build a house of prayer on the coast so that I could care for his people as well as I did for the Indians.

"We are all dying," he said, "we are getting snuffed out day by day and nobody cares about us. No one looks after our sick or pities our misfortunes."

I had a great desire to fall in with his wishes on condition that his people shall provide me with food while I worked to build a mission house, but I remembered the prohibition which had been imposed on me and did not dare offend against it. Only military men can appreciate the position I was in.

Tsapoutaytok continued, "We've come to learn to love the priest and his religion. We will have no other priest among us. I don't know why you hesitate to settle down with us. We've only come here in such numbers to benefit from your visit for the post manager had promised us you would come."

I did not want to wound his susceptibility by reminding him of the past conduct of his compatriots toward us. I did not dare tell him that proofs of their good will beyond mere words were needed and that

nothing confirmed them. I only mentioned my bishop's temporary prohibition. He could not appreciate that reason which seemed to him to show weak timidity. Out of the corner of his mouth he muttered in derision, "A woman's reason!" and turned his back on me.

Had I known then about the two frightful murders that had just been committed by his people, I could have given this vain chief plenty of reasons. His son, a good-looking young man, a white and pink skinned, masculine-looking fellow, had just killed an old man from the Anderson river, from behind, stabbing him in the back with his dagger, because the poor old man had refused to sell him his belt.

The murderer hid in his tent and did not show at the Fort for fear of the anger and just vengeance of the Anderson river Eskimos. It was in order to have me as a guarantee against the vengeance of chief Terter's people that Tsapoutaytok was so keen to have me go along to the coast with them.

But in Terter's band the knife too had been busy among his own people. Without mentioning the double murder by which the chief had avenged his brother's death, which after all among people in a state of nature was no more than an act of justice according to the law of retribution, and further excuseable because the two killers had pushed Tsapoutaytok's patience and forbearance to the limit, Terter had yet another assassin among his warriors. It was Tchiatsiark with the big nose with whom I'd shared a snow house on the Anderson in 1865. But he was not afraid. He went everywhere, his head held high with the air of a conqueror, not caring a fig for the Mackenzie Eskimos whom his deed had justly offended.

Consequently Terter came to talk to me about the same problem as his rival from the Mackenzie delta and there has not been one of these chiefs up to Kouninana, the present one, who did not ask me for help in his role as a pacifier. All feared a collision between the Inuit of the east, the delta and the west.

Mr. Murdoch MacLeod who had lived among the Eskimos for 15 years and knew them well, told me he'd never found himself in such non-reassuring circumstances among them. An inveterate jealousy, a sharp rivalry between these peoples, all of one race, made them into enemies as the Hareskins and Loucheux had been before the whites had come. Plenty of Eskimo women came to see me in the room the post manager had placed at my disposal, and which was no other than the former room of an Anglican minister. They stuck their tongues out at me in the most gracious manner, even knelt before me so that I should make the sign of the cross over them, a thing they had never done before. It is so true that man's efforts are in vain until God had spoken to the heart. In all things one must wait but be ever ready to seize the opportunity, God's moment and the call of the Spirit which blows where it will and when it will. Men still outnumbered my women visitors and I had to deplore and reject only very few of those amorous advances and

propositions which the unfortunate Eskimo women, without any scruples, make to whites and Indians for motives of gain.

These unfortunate Eskimos and even the Protestant Loucheux have such confused ideas of religion and morals that these criminal advances don't make them feel an urge to learn better. The thing neither the men nor the women liked any more than the Parisians was to kneel down to pray, it was a matter of their padded coats and the care needed to preserve the immaculate whiteness of their soft leather.

All would have gone well with the people at the post but for the jealousy of the Loucheux, never so aptly called quarrelers as on this occasion. The opposition to the Eskimos they revealed to me now openly, now secretly out of mere jealousy and lack of judgement but also from lack of a Christian spirit and of charity, made me quite angry. In the eyes of the Loucheux the Eskimos were hardly better than their dogs. They were indignant I should waste my energies on their enemies, that I cared for them as if they were already Christians. Such is the savage, so exclusive, so disparaging and envious of everything which is not of his own little tribe, that he can appreciate or admire only his own and cannot understand that one can love and admire anyone but him.

Most of the time it is these little plots, these shabby rivalries based on envy of one tribe toward another which abort our work and undermine our achievements. But never had I met such opposition from a people reputed to be fervent Christians. There was a fanaticism which I could neither approve nor tolerate here.

A man named Firmin Zjen (the muskrat) whom I had baptised in November 1865 was the main instigator of this anti-Christian league. This unfortunate began by breaking the bottle in which I kept the sacramental wine so that I was unable to celebrate mass even once during my stay at MacPherson. When the Loucheux from Tsi-kka-tchig arrived at the Fort, about 200 of them, the Indians claimed a monopoly of my person. They surrounded me like little children and absolutely demanded that I give them a mission morning and evening from which they wanted to exclude the Eskimos without pity. Never have Yankees carried their ostracism of coloured people in their assemblies any further than this. The Loucheux gentlemen claimed a superiority over the poor pagans which they do have in matters of morality, gentleness and good sense, but which in my eyes was cancelled in these circumstances by their jealousy and total want of Christian charity. With it all they were restless, outrageously roisterous and full of mischief. From time to time during the course of the day they brought along some Eskimos to my room and showed them some pictures representing hell or the death of a reprobate and told them, "Look, that's what awaits your wickedness, your shamelessness, your murders, you bunch of brigands that you are!"

And it was up to me to mitigate this vehemence with paternal looks, to moderate their Huguenot-like sharp zeal by some of goodwill

directed at the poor Eskimos and a sharp look of reproach at the intrusive would-be preachers.

This fad, this urge of the Catholic Loucheux to get religious instruction, also stimulated the jealousy of their Anglican brothers. These too came to see me, to shake my hand, to ask me to see all their sick, to thank me for having come to visit them again, but in general with the exception of five families, they excused themselves from taking part in the Catholic prayers because of their Anglican antecedents. I was far from pressing them to join.

I used the "muskrat" as interpreter with his Peel river compatriots, believing in his good faith and his orthodoxy. How astonished I was when I discovered I was dealing with a cheat, a false brother, that I was sheltering a snake in my bosom! This is what I heard this man say to the poor Loucheux who had come to join the flock of catechumens.

"What have you come to this priest for? He doesn't understand you, he doesn't even care for you. All his affection and his care are for the Eskimos, your enemies. Apart from that, what need of a priest do you have? Am I not enough? Don't I pray for you every spring when I come here?"

Astounded to hear such words from the mouth of a man I'd only asked to interpret to the Loucheux to be quite sure that these new Catholics should really understand me well, I took one of his listeners aside and demanded an explanation.

"Don't you know that the 'muskrat' is a seer?" Schoekoutahyiw, one of the principal converts told me. "It's two or three years now that he has been getting revelations. He calls himself a priest and he prays and sings for us every spring."

That explained everything. He was one of those religious maniacs, one of those madmen all missions have come across. They are more dangerous than real madmen for they are convinced they get their instructions from heaven and that they have the gift of prophecy.

I told Zjen what I'd heard and tasked him with his bad faith toward me, but as he denied everything I indicated that I was through with his services from that moment, for I could instruct the Loucheux without his help.

Thus God's work suffers everywhere, and it is always envy, jealousy, the original source of the woes of mankind, which hinders prosperity and beneficial progress on earth. Against such difficulties the human spirit knows not how to prevail, the efforts of zeal are paralysed, charity is denigrated, truth is lost again and its minister is lucky to content himself with people taking their hats off to him, the mark of a deference and respect which is purely external.

On June the 15th the Eskimos, headed back for the coast, not without once more flooding me with requests that I become their priest. For two days there had been talk at Fort MacPherson that the Eskimos plotted to take the post and to sack it. That at least was the rumour among the Loucheux, while the Eskimos stayed as calm and peaceable as ever. It was the same old story that had been going around there for ten years. In the face of these annual and recurrent panics one doesn't know whom to blame, whom to accuse of ill-will. Did the Eskimos boast of planning the enterprise in order to keep the Indians in fear and to dominate them? Or was it a calumny attributed to them by the Loucheux in order to shine in the eyes of the whites and to capture their good will? I was never able to discover which it was. When I talked to the Eskimos about the stupidity and injustice of their threats they always denied having made them and accused the Loucheux of defamation motivated by fear. When I accused the Loucheux of slandering the Eskimos they would say, "These dogs have really planned these terrible things, you don't know them."

Even the English post manager, though he pretended to despise the rumours, talked to me about this matter the day before the Inuit left. He looked worried and carefully bolted the gate of the fort every evening and blamed me for having allowed the Eskimos free access to my room as I had to the other natives. He was agitated. In short his behaviour proved that he himself believed the rumour and that he knew the recklessness of the Eskimos too well not to have some apprehension.

During the last night of the Eskimos' stay the general dance of departure was to be held. But the Loucheux asked the Eskimos in vain to take part. Only Terter's people when begged to do so performed a few steps. The usual joy and enthusiasm was missing. The Eskimos kept themselves apart in small groups, whispering among themselves, or they stayed quietly in their tents.

Was this to destroy the suspicions which had been raised and to make the whites realize they planned nothing sinister? That's what I thought.

But the Loucheux were convinced of the opposite. They saw conspirators everywhere, they suspected plots and ambushes in every group of Eskimos, in every clump of willows and every peacefully closed tent. So they did not dance either but wandered about all night armed with their loaded guns and long knives which they brandished ostentatiously, posing as the defenders of the English and of their Forts, ready for all eventualities. The 300 of them created far more uproar than the 500 Eskimos that were there.

My eight or ten Hareskin Indians were in a feverish fear throughout our stay at the fort. They had borrowed my tent and had asked me to allow them to pitch it just outside my room, within the stockade. Permission was granted but they were not reassured. They had brought long knives but lacked the courage to carry them about in public. So they came to hide them in my bed, in case of need they said.

The sinister, distrustful figures, these people who could not meet without smiles and flattering looks and words while their hearts were full of hate and suspicion toward one another; these men with their drawn knives who while talking made them glitter under the eyes of those they were speaking to, ready to cut their throats at the first signal; the fort gates guarded in the daytime and bolted at night: all this paraphernalia as of a siege gave Fort MacPherson a sad air which wrung my heart. One must be accustomed from infancy to war-like demonstrations and the military aspect of that post not to be painfully impressed.

The Eskimos for the first time left me in mute resentment and in a sombre mood. Their efforts to secure me had come to nothing. I had had to respect the order, or rather the prohibition, which had been laid upon me. The widow of the great chief Navikan made a last effort which was no more successful. Their remonstrances brought me to tears. They showed a regret and disappointment which were much more poignant to me than the failure with the well disposed Protestants Zjen had prepared for me.

"O Perk Pitchitork! o innok-toyok! Oh Père Petitot, oh great man, great man!" they said to me as they shook hands in farewell.

Never did I find obedience so difficult. Never had my labours been so ill-rewarded. Restricted in my actions and betrayed by a fanatical neophyte, I was yet to be deceived by an Eskimo in whom I'd taken an interest. Arviouna took on that role.

Having become interpreter in succession to Tchia-wetlo, Arviouna had become a sort of celebrity at MacPherson, though he was very unpopular with the Eskimos. On that last day I asked him to interpret for me as I had some important advice to give the Inuit about their behaviour and I wanted to be well understood. So I spoke to him in English, that he might turn my message into good Eskimo. Well, the unfortunate acted like the "muskrat," telling his people the very opposite of my words.

The Eskimos who listened to my and Arviouna's discourse sat there sombrely with lowered heads and sad faces. Immediately I concluded he must be delivering some displeasing tirade of his own invention to them. The words torkro, death, torkrota, murderer, which I'd not mentioned, recurred too often in his harangue. So I interrupted him.

"What are you telling these people to make them so sad? I said nothing that could have pained them."

He smiled and answered with a candid air, "But, uncle, I only repeated to them what you'd told me in English."

"That was a long discourse for such few words of mine. And why have their faces become so sombre? Nothing in what I said could have saddened them."

"That's because their hearts are evil. The truth does not please them. When one tells them 'you must reject wickedness' they become indignant and say we are honest people, we only do good."

"What you say surprises me. I've already made the same reproaches to them but they did not feel hurt then. They told me they wanted me to be with them so that they might learn to become better, for more or less they are all thieves and killers. They won't know how to become good people by acting this way."

But some loyal Loucheux who had been present at this sermon assured me Arviouna had frightened the Eskimos, threatening them with sickness and death if they prayed with me, for the young man was sold on the Anglican ministers and that was the main reason his people looked down on him.

After the departure of the Eskimos all the Loucheux Protestants as well as Catholics once more flocked to my room though I had taken no steps to have the first named. Five families from among the Anglicans came over to Catholicism of their own will and out of conviction. The following winter the number was tripled.

The post factotum Baptiste Boucher, formerly Sir John Franklin's and Dr. Richardson's interpreter, upon this news came to beg me once more to go to Alaska, formerly Russian America. For the Rhane Kouttchin, people of the river and the Koucha-Kouttchin, the giant people, two divisions of Loucheux, were asking for me. He was astounded to hear me evade his invitation as I'd evaded that of the Eskimos. Only obedience, such as a soldier owes to his superior, made me return straight home to Good Hope from Fort Peel [MacPherson] without going any farther.

This is something one can never get the natives to understand. The old metis was shocked and when he left me said mockingly, "This father, he's a real Eskimo."

Finally on June 21st I left Fort MacPherson, arriving at Good Hope on the 30th. In high spirits at the excellent disposition I'd found among the two peoples but with a heavy heart at having had to displease both by obeying a command not to travel beyond MacPherson and to postpone the realization of my hopes for the future. [A future which for Petitot never came.]





TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

1. p.v        The Oblates of Mary Immaculate are an order established in France in 1826 to serve the poor. They began work in the Canadian Mission fields in 1841 and contributed a number of highly literate priests to the Canadian North-west, priests known as much by their published works as by their missionary activities.
2. p.14       Vade-mecum, literally "come with me," generally a book such as a pocket guide a traveller takes along on his journeys.
3. p.28       The blue fox is a colour phase of the Arctic or white fox. Silver, cross and black foxes are all colour phases of the red fox. The cross fox is poorly described by Petitot. Its general colour is greyish brown with a black streak along the back which is crossed by a similar streak from shoulder to shoulder.
4. p.36       Cosimo de'Medici 1519-1574, first grand duke of Tuscany, was accused by his political enemies of incest with two of his daughters, but this and other charges, though possibly not groundless, were not proved. Cosimo was, however, a cruel and unscrupulous ruler who had many of his enemies executed and caused the assassination of a number of others outside his realm.
5. p.65       Atahualpa c. 1502-1533, the last ruler of the Incas, met the Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro at a conference. During this a Spanish priest expounded Christianity to Atahualpa and called on him to accept both Christianity and Spanish sovereignty. Atahualpa angrily rejected both, grasped the priest's bible and flung it to the ground. Petitot seems to imply that this shows that Atahualpa took the power of Christianity to lie in the book. Upon this gesture of the Atahualpa's he was seized by Pizarro, who kept him prisoner for some months, and finally, in spite of a huge ransom, had him put to death on false charges.
6. p.93       Mephibosheth (II Samuel 19, 24 et seq.) was a crippled and unfortunate son of Saul, King of Israel.
7. p.99       Robert the Devil, is a legendary character, supposedly conceived in answer to his mother's prayers to the devil. After an evil and lawless early life he was believed to have reformed. His story gave the title to an opera by Meyerbeer in 1831.

8. p.131      Petitot's forecast turned out to be only partly correct. The present day western Eskimos, all converted to Catholic, Protestant or sectarian Christianity, dress "chastely" but their sexual mores seem to me to be much the same as those of their ancestors.
9. p.145      Nachi Kouttchin, literally mad people. The Loucheux (often called Kutchin in English) call themselves by the latter name which, as just explained, simply means people or the people. Dene means the same in the languages of the remaining Mackenzie valley Indian tribes Chipewyan, Hare Indian, Dogrib and Slavey. Inuit has the same meaning for the Eskimos. All these seem to have looked on themselves as "the people" and others as different and to some extent inferior, just as the ancient Greeks classified mankind into Greeks and Barbarians. To some degree this conceit seems to be universal and it may well be one of the roots of Nationalism.
10. p.177      The passage of polemics against Richardson which follows is unfortunate. Apart from Richardson's retraction (1850) of his sighting of Eskimo Lake, Richardson was right and Petitot was in the wrong. Petitot saw Sitidgi Lake from which the Natowdja River enters the head of the Eskimo Lakes. His non-existent Napoleon III Channel, about which he merely had information from natives, but which he did not see, is probably based on information about the Eskimo Lakes, his informants neglecting to tell him that they had crossed land when passing from the eastern side of the Mackenzie Delta into the lakes, and again when passing from the lakes over the neck of land formed by the base of Nicholson Peninsula. (Compare with maps on Pages 4 and 5.)
11. p.183      Petitot must be referring to the Mongolian or epicanthic fold, a bulge of the upper eyelid due to fat deposition toward the inner angle of the eye. This feature gives the eye a slanting or oblique appearance and is characteristic of Mongol peoples in general. It is hardly a striking character in Eskimos for the Danish anthropologist, Birket-Smith found it in only 26% of over a hundred Hudson Bay Eskimos in the 1920's. That it should have been typical of the inhabitants of just one quarter of Paris seems highly improbable.